



SHERIDAN'S COMEDIES: THE RIVALS AND THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

BRANDER MATTHEWS, RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

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Sheridan's Comedies: The Rivals And School For Scandal Brander Matthews, Richard Brinsley

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SHERIDAN'S COMEDIES

THE RIVALS

THE S... FOR ...

WITH AN ...

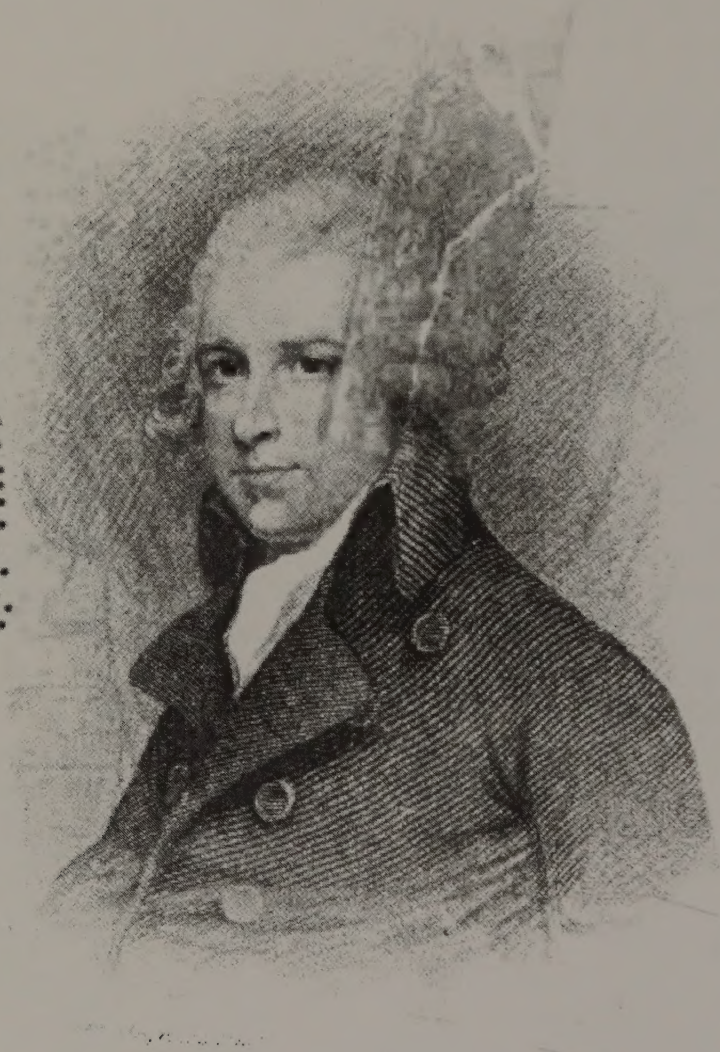
1852

NEW YORK

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RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.
(From the Portrait by Reynolds.)

SHERIDAN'S COMEDIES

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THE RIVALS

AND

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES TO EACH
PLAY, AND A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE
IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
PUBLISHERS

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1904

TO
AUSTIN DOBSON
A POET WITH THE GIFT OF COMEDY
THIS EDITION OF SHERIDAN'S PLAYS
IS INSCRIBED
BY HIS FRIEND THE EDITOR

M41093

PREFACE.

“To read a good comedy is to keep the best company in the world, where the best things are said, and the most amusing happen,” — so Hazlitt tells us. Sheridan’s two great comedies are seen on the stage to-day more often than any two plays of any other dramatist, not excepting Shakspeare; it may be doubted whether even ‘Hamlet’ is acted more than the ‘School for Scandal.’ They are read as freely and frequently and with as much pleasure as are the plays of any English dramatist, with the sole exception of Shakspeare. Neither the ‘Rivals’ nor the ‘School for Scandal’ is one of the eighteenth-century classics which, like the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*, like ‘Rasselas,’ and perhaps, alas! the ‘Vicar of Wakefield,’ is taken on trust and read by title only, like a bill before the House. And yet, although they bear their hundred years bravely, although they are acted half a thousand times in succession at one theatre, although they continue to come out in new editions for the table

of the library and for the pocket of the traveller, they have not hitherto received the careful editing which the classics of the drama deserve and demand.

To present Sheridan's plays in a pure text, with all needful illustrative notes, with short introductions setting forth their history, and with a biographical sketch of their author, so that the reader might be provided with whatever is necessary for the full enjoyment of these centenarian comedies, — this is the object of the present edition.

For the text, I have followed that of the edition of two volumes octavo, published in 1821 with a preface by Moore. For the brief biography of Sheridan I need say little: it is the result of original research and it contains few second-hand facts; but so carefully has the ground been gleaned by earlier writers, that I can claim as my own by right of discovery only the explanation of the means whereby Sheridan became the owner of Drury Lane Theatre; — and even the solution of this problem is plausible and probable rather than absolutely certain.

I take pleasure in thanking here, RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, Esq., of Frampton Court, Dorchester, for the courtesy and consideration with which he allowed me to examine the manuscripts of his grand-

father now in his possession. My thanks are also due to my friends LAURENCE HUTTON and H. C. BUNNER, for the invaluable aid they have kindly given me in the preparation of these pages for the press.

B. M.

NEW YORK,
October, 1884.

P.S. Since this preface was written, now nearly a score of years ago, several biographies of Sheridan have been published, — one, exhaustive and admirable, by Mr. W. Fraser Rae. The present sketch has now been somewhat revised in the light cast by these later books. The tentative explanation, first suggested in these pages, as to the way in which Sheridan was enabled to get control of Drury Lane Theatre, has been adopted by Mr. Rae.

B. M.

NEW YORK,
April, 1904.

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*R. v. d. 1770
6 yrs before
Leach & Johnson*

*Born when
Johnson
was 42*

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

————— 1751-1816

RICHARD BRINSLEY BUTLER SHERIDAN, dramatist, orator, and wit, was born at No. 12 Dorset Street, Dublin, Ireland, in September, 1751. He died in Savile Row, London, England, July 7, 1816, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

"Most men," says Sainte-Beuve, "have not read those whom they judge; they have a ready-made opinion got by word of mouth, one scarcely knows how." No one has suffered more from these off-hand judgments than Richard Brinsley Sheridan. A ready-made opinion of a man who found so many and such various means of expressing himself, an opinion got by word of mouth, one hardly knows how, can scarcely be other than unjust.

(The case against Sheridan, as a man of letters, may be briefly stated. It is substantially, that he stole the characters and the plots of his plays, that he pilfered the points of his speeches, and that he prepared his jokes in advance, appropriating to his own use any jest he found ready to his hand.) The counsel for the prosecution once got access to a British review, and declared with forensic emphasis that Sheridan was "a plodding and heavy Beaumarchais, with all the tricks, but without the genuine brightness and originality of the Frenchman." When one reads a solemn statement like this, the question forms itself of its own accord: Was he really plodding and heavy and with-

out brightness? Had he no originality of his own? Was he a wit, or had he none? To a question put thus bluntly the answer is easy. *Sheridan was a wit; and he was but little else. As far as mere wit could carry him, Sheridan went, and but little farther.* He had wit raised to the zenith, and he could bend it to his bidding. In his early youth poetry of the Pope period was in fashion; Sheridan set his wits to work and brought forth Papal verse, quite as infallible as any made in his time. A little later he saw that through the stage door lay the shortest way to fame and fortune; and he wrote plays brimful of a wit which even now, after the lapse of a century and more, is well nigh as fresh as when it was first penned. When in after years he went to Parliament and needs must be an orator, again his wit was equal to the task, and he delivered orations which the great speakers, in that time of great speakers, declared to be unsurpassed. Had any other call been made on his wits, they would have done their best, and their best would have been good indeed. *Whatever he produced, poem, or play, or speech, was but the chameleon expression of his wit. If in intellectual quality any of his work was thin, in quantity it was full beyond all cavil.* No one ever more truly — to use the phrase with no invidious intent — no one ever more truly lived on his wits than Sheridan, not even the arch wit, M. de Voltaire, or the Caron de Beaumarchais to whom the stolid British reviewer deemed him inferior.

I.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was the son of Thomas and Frances Sheridan, and the grandson of Dr.

Sheridan, the friend and correspondent of Swift. Thomas Sheridan was a teacher of elocution, a player, a manager, a lexicographer, and altogether an odd character. He thought himself a greater actor than David Garrick, and the author of a better dictionary than Samuel Johnson's. He seems to have had no great love for Richard Brinsley, and to have given the boy little care. Frances Sheridan was a woman of singular gifts and singular charm. Garrick and Johnson liked her, although they did not like her husband; and they appreciated her remarkable literary merits. Garrick brought out and acted in the 'Discovery,' a comedy of hers; and Dr. Johnson praised her novel, the 'Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph,' saying he knew not if she had a right, on moral principles, to make her readers suffer so much. It can scarcely be doubted that her influence upon her son's character would have been highly beneficial; but unfortunately he was not always with her, and she died in 1766, when he was only fifteen years old. The absence of parental care left a fatal impress on his character, and it is to his unregulated youth that we may ascribe most of the wanderings, the missteps, and the mishaps of his manhood.

When the boy was seven years of age he was placed at school with Mr. Thomas Whyte, who was afterward the teacher of Sheridan's biographer, Moore. Here he was considered a dunce. The next year, in 1759, the family removed to England; and in 1762 Richard Brinsley was sent to Harrow, where he remained for about three years. He was popular with his school-fellows, and his teachers believed in his ability. He showed already the indolence which was always one of his most marked characteristics, and which he possessed in conjunction,

curiously enough, with an extraordinary power of application whenever he was aroused by an adequate motive. He seems to have acquired some understanding of Latin and Greek. He formed many friendships at Harrow. The chief partner of his youthful sports and studies was Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, with whom he translated the seventh idyl of Theocritus and many of the minor poems credited to that "singer of the field and fold."

In 1769 the elder Sheridan returned to London from France with his favourite son, Charles ; and calling Richard to his side, he began to instruct both boys in English grammar and in oratory. "They attended also the fencing and riding schools of Mr. Angelo," who has recorded the fretful dignity of Thomas Sheridan, and the geniality and good humour of his younger son. In the middle of 1770 the Sheridans moved to Bath, a hot-bed of fast and fashionable society, and about as unsuitable and unwholesome a place as could be imagined for a young man of eighteen with Richard Brinsley Sheridan's lack of training and want of prospects. He kept up a lively correspondence with Halhed, who was then at Oxford. The friends were ambitious and hopeful ; and they determined to attempt literature together, fondly dreaming that they might awake one morning and find themselves famous. They planned a play and a periodical paper ; Halhed wrote most of the former, and Sheridan sketched out the only number of the latter which Moore could discover. Then they attempted a metrical version of the love-epistles credited to the Greek sophist, Aristænetus. It is to be noted that Le Sage also began his literary life by translating Aristænetus. In November, 1770, Halhed had made a rough draft ;

it was not until December that Sheridan, in his usual dilatory way, set about his task of revision. There is a French version (Poitiers, 1597), but Sheridan had not gone to France in 1764 with the family; he knew little French, and he came in time to hate the language. He took several months over his work, and though the completed manuscript was to have been given to the publisher in March, it was not received by him until May; and it was only in August, 1771, that there appeared for sale "The Love Epistles of Aristænetus, Translated from the Greek into English metre."

—— "Love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges; hath his seat
In reason, and is judicious."

— MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, Book 8.

"London: Printed for J. Wilkie, No. 71 St. Paul's Church-yard. MDCCLXXI."

The quotation from Milton we may credit to Sheridan; it is impudently humorous in the eyes of those who know how light and lively are some of the love-passages related by the Greek tale-teller. The translation was anonymous, and the preface was signed with the joint initials of the young poets, H. S. It is highly comic to read that one of the reviews fathered it on "Mr. Johnson, author of the English Dictionary," etc. Moore and Sheridan's other biographers agree in calling the translation a failure in that it met with no favour from the public. It may be that the authors made no money by it; but it succeeded at least in getting itself into a second edition, which does not look exactly like flat failure. It has since been reprinted with Propertius, Petronius Arbiter, and Johannes Secundus, in a volume of

the protection of husbands who labour under the incapacity of making repartees." And Taine, with all his French tolerance for wit, is disgusted with the indecency of the comic writers of the Restoration, and says, "We hold our nose and read on." The times were ripe for a new writer.

Few of the dramatists of the day were formidable rivals. The one man who might have been a competitor to be feared, a fellow Irishman,—for, as Latin comedy was imitated from the Greek, and as French comedy was modelled upon the Italian, so English comedy has in great part been written by Irishmen,—the author of the 'Good-natured Man,' Oliver Goldsmith, died in 1774; 'She Stoops to Conquer,' produced the year before, had scotched Sentimental-Comedy, an imported French fashion, which was slowly strangling the life out of the comic muse; and although Sheridan, in the 'Rivals,' might choose to do obeisance to this passing fancy by the introduction of those two most tedious persons, Faulkland and Julia, he was soon to repent him of his sins, and in the 'School for Scandal' deal it a final and fatal blow. Cumberland, the sole survivor of the school, had but little life left in him after the appearance of the 'Critic'; and no life is now left in his plays, which have hardly seen the light of the lamps these four-score years. Better luck has attended the more worthy work of George Colman the elder, the author of the 'Jealous Wife,' and of David Garrick, the author possibly of 'High Life Below Stairs,' who had also collaborated in the 'Clandestine Marriage'; these three plays keep the stage to this day. But in 1775 both Colman and Garrick had ceased to write for the theatre. The coarse, vigorous, hardy satires of Samuel Foote, and the namby-pamby tragedies

and wishy-washy comedies — “not translations only, taken from the French” — of Arthur Murphy, were alike beginning to pall upon playgoers. Among all these dramatists, and greater than any of them, appeared the author of the ‘*Rivals*.’

Although written hastily at the request of Harris, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, the ‘*Rivals*’ was not wholly a new composition; it is rather an elaboration of earlier sketches and inchoate memorandums jotted down by Sheridan at various times after he was seventeen years old, when the hope of gaining independence by writing for the stage first flitted before his eyes. And this reworking of accumulated old material was characteristic of Sheridan throughout life, and in whatever department of literature he might venture himself. His poems, his plays, his jests, and his speeches abound in phrases and suggestions set down years before. Sheridan must needs have had aid from earlier work, since we find him telling his father-in-law, November 17, 1774, that he would have the comedy in rehearsal in a few days, and that he had not written a line of it two months before, “except a scene or two, which I believe you have seen in an odd act of a little farce.” Haste of composition is shown in the inordinate bulk of the play, which was at least double the length of any acting comedy — so Sheridan tells us in the preface — when he put it into Harris’s hands. “I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailing of it, till, I believe, his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness, and he left many excrescences remaining because he had assisted in pruning so many more. Hence, though I was not uninformed that the acts were still too long, I flattered myself that, after the

first trial, I might with safer judgment proceed to remove what should appear to have been most dissatisfactory."

The 'Rivals' was first acted at Covent Garden Theatre on the evening of January 17, 1775, and it was damned out of hand. It was repeated the next night, and then withdrawn for repairs. A change of front in the face of the enemy is always a risky experiment, but Sheridan operated it successfully. Lightened of the feeble scenes by condensation, and strengthened by the substitution of Clinch as Sir Lucius O'Trigger for Lee, who had acted the part very badly, the 'Rivals' was again offered to the public, and was acted fourteen or fifteen times before the season closed on June 1. On the tenth night a new prologue was spoken by Mrs. Bulkley, in which Sheridan made adroit use of the figures of Comedy and Tragedy, which stood on each side of the stage, and defended his use of broader comic effects than the partisans of Sentimental-Comedy could tolerate. After the first few nights, however, the 'Rivals' picked up and held its own. Its brisk and bristling action, its highly ingenious equivoke, its broadly limned and sharply contrasted characters, its close sequence of highly comic situations—all these soon began to tell with the public, and the piece became one of the first favourites of the playgoer.

As Goldsmith had shown his gratitude to Quick, who acted Tony Lumpkin to his satisfaction, by signing the 'Grumbler,' an adaptation of the 'Grondeur' of Brueys, acted for Quick's benefit, so Sheridan, in gratitude to Clinch, who had bravely lent his aid to pluck the flower success from the nettle danger, wrote 'St. Patrick's Day; or the Scheming Lieutenant,' a farce in two acts, produced for

Clinch's benefit, May 2, 1775, and acted six times before the close of the season at the end of the month. 'St. Patrick's Day' is a lively enough little play, of no great consequence or merit, owing something in the conduct of its plot and the comicality of its situations to Molière, and containing only a few of the brilliant flashes of wit which we are wont to consider as Sheridan's especial property.

Sheridan devoted the summer to the writing of a comic opera, the music for which was selected and composed by his father-in-law, Mr. Linley. "We owe to Gay," said Dr. Johnson, "the ballad-opera — a mode of comedy which at first was supposed to delight only by its novelty, but has now, by the experience of half a century, been so well accommodated to the disposition of a popular audience that it is likely to keep long possession of the stage." And of all ballad-operas, Gay's first was easily the foremost until this of Sheridan's; the 'Beggar's Opera' had no real rival until the production of the 'Duenna.' While, however, the 'Beggar's Opera' owed part of its extraordinary vogue to its personal and political satire, the 'Duenna' had no political purport; its only aim was to please, and in this it succeeded abundantly. Brought out originally at Covent Garden on November 21, 1775, it was performed seventy-five times during the ensuing season — an extraordinary number in those days — twelve more than the 'Beggar's Opera' had achieved. In order to counteract this great success of the rival house, Garrick, then the manager of Drury Lane, as Moore tells us, "found it necessary to bring forward all the weight of his own best characters, and even had recourse to the expedient of playing off the mother against the son, by reviving Mrs. Frances

Sheridan's comedy of the 'Discovery,' and acting the principal part in it himself. In allusion to the increased fatigue which this competition with the 'Duenna' brought upon Garrick, who was then entering on his sixtieth year, it was said by an actor of the day that "the old woman would be the death of the old man."

The 'Rivals,' 'St. Patrick's Day,' and the 'Duenna' — a comedy in five acts, a farce in two acts, and a comic opera in three acts — were all produced in the year 1775 at Covent Garden Theatre. Before the run of the 'Duenna' was ended, Sheridan was in negotiation with Garrick for the purchase, in conjunction with Linley and Dr. Ford, of the great actor's half of Drury Lane Theatre. Although Garrick and Thomas Sheridan were rival actors and never exactly hit it off together, the former always had a cordial esteem for Mrs. Sheridan, and he was prepared to carry this over to her son. So when he made up his mind to give up acting and to abandon management, he was ready to think well of Sheridan's offer to buy him out. Colman, to whom the management was first offered, would purchase solely on condition that he could buy the whole; Garrick was only half owner, and young Lacey, who had the other half, refused to sell. While Garrick was giving his farewell performances, the negotiations with Sheridan were pending. The great actor — probably the greatest who ever trod the stage — spoke his last speech and made his last exit on June 10, 1776; and on June 24, so Davies tells us, he signed the contract of sale to Sheridan, Linley, and Ford. By twenty-eight years of good management the value of Drury Lane Theatre had been trebled, and the selling price was fixed at £70,000, or £35,000 for Garrick's half.

Sheridan and Linley were to find £10,000 each, and their friend Dr. Ford was to supply the remaining £15,000. Where Sheridan raised the money for his share has been one of the mighty mysteries of theatrical history. There is a general belief that he borrowed — but from whom? Watkins, his first biographer, mentions a mortgage to Dr. Ford, and suggests that Garrick stood behind Ford. Moore, his second biographer, disbelieves in and discredits any loan from either Ford or Garrick.

Nobody has yet cited the evidence of Sydney Smith, who said that Creevy told him that once when dining with Sheridan, after the ladies had departed, Sheridan drew his chair to the fire and confided to Creevy that they had just had a fortune left to them. "Mrs. Sheridan and I," said he, "have made the solemn vow to each other to mention it to no one, and nothing induces me now to confide it to you but the absolute conviction that Mrs. Sheridan is at this moment confiding it to Mrs. Creevy upstairs." Now, this may be nothing more than the exaggeration of a humorist reported with exaggeration by another humorist. And then, again, it may be true; it is not at all impossible, or even improbable, that a fortune had been left suddenly and unexpectedly to Sheridan, or, more likely, to his wife; but there is no other reference to this wealth from the skies; and probably the story is not to be taken seriously. The wonder as to where Sheridan got the money to pay for one-seventh of Drury Lane Theatre is augmented and completed by wonder as to how two years or so later he got money to buy out Lacey's half of the theatre. What was a wonder to Sheridan's contemporaries was also a wonder to all his biographers, until the present writer adventured the following explanation: —

Of the original £35,000 paid Garrick, Sheridan was to find £10,000. Dr. Watkins asserts that he raised £8700 of this £10,000 by two mortgages, one of £1000 to a Mr. Wallis, and another of £7700 to Dr. Ford. If we accept this assertion, — and there is no reason why we should not, — all that Sheridan had to make up was £1300, a sum he could easily compass after the success of the ‘*Rivals*’ and the ‘*Duenna*,’ even supposing that he did not encroach on, or had already exhausted, the £3000 settled on his wife by Mr. Long. Before the end of 1776, dissensions arose between Sheridan, Linley, and Ford, on one side, and Lacey on the other, in the course of which Lacey sought to sell part of his half to two friends. But these dissensions were ended in 1778 by Sheridan’s purchase of Lacey’s half. A note in Sheridan’s handwriting, quoted by Moore, says that Lacey was paid “a price exceeding £45,000,” — which would go to show that the total value of the property had risen in two years from £70,000 to £90,000. Most writers on the subject have taken this note of Sheridan’s to mean that he paid at least £45,000 in cash, and they have all exhausted their efforts in guessing where he got the money. But if we compare Moore’s statement with Watkins’s, we get nearer a solution of the difficulty. Watkins says that Lacey’s share was already mortgaged for £31,500, and that Sheridan assumed this mortgage, and agreed further to pay in return for the equity of redemption, two annuities of £500 each. This double obligation (the mortgage for £31,500 and the annuities) represents “a price exceeding £45,000”; but it did not call for the expenditure of a single penny in cash. On the contrary the purchase of Lacey’s half of the theatre actually put

money into Sheridan's pocket, for he at once divided his original one-seventh between Linley and Dr. Ford, making each of their shares up to one-fourth; and even if they paid him no increase on the original price, he would have been enabled to pay off the £8700 mortgages to Dr. Ford, and to Mr. Wallis, and to get back the £1300 which he seems to have advanced himself. In fact, it appears that Sheridan invested only £1300 in cash when he bought one-seventh of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1776, and that he received this back when he became possessed of one-half of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1778, then valued at £90,000. Sheridan afterward bought Dr. Ford's one-fourth for £17,000; and Moore found among Sheridan's papers, letters of remonstrance from Dr. Ford's son, indicating that this debt had not been paid promptly.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan succeeded David Garrick as the manager of Drury Lane in the middle of 1776. A sharp contrast was at once visible between the care and frugality of the old management and the reckless carelessness of the new. Garrick planned everything in advance with the utmost skill and forethought, and was never taken unawares. Sheridan trusted to luck and to prompt action on the spur of the moment. The elder Sheridan became acting-manager, a post for which his somewhat doubtful temper more or less unfitted him. Garrick continued to advise with Sheridan, and probably helped him in the first important production of the new management, the revival with judicious omissions of Congreve's 'Old Bachelor,' which had not been acted for sixteen years. The 'Rivals,' originally performed at Covent Garden, was now brought out at the theatre of which its author was manager.

Early in 1777, on February 24, Sheridan produced his first new play at his own house. This was 'A Trip to Scarborough,' and its chief fault was that it was neither new nor Sheridan's, being in fact a deodorized adaptation of Vanbrugh's 'Relapse.' As an incident in the 'Country Wife' of Wycherley — whom Sheridan denied ever having read — may have suggested a chief scene of the 'Duenna,' and as more than one scene of the forthcoming 'School for Scandal' was to recall Congreve, it was only fair that Vanbrugh should have his turn. Oddly enough, Farquhar is the only one of the four foremost dramatists of the Restoration from whom Sheridan did not borrow directly; and it is Farquhar with whom he has the most intellectual sympathy. Sir Walter Scott compares Sheridan with Vanbrugh and Congreve, and Lord Macaulay classes together Congreve and Sheridan; and yet it is Farquhar whose influence over him is greatest, and whom he imitated from afar, much as Thackeray imitated Fielding, and Dickens, Smollett.

Vanbrugh's 'Relapse' is hopelessly unfit for the modern stage. Moore wonders that Sheridan could have hoped to defecate the play and leave any of the wit. But Vanbrugh differs from Congreve. Of all attempts to deodorize Congreve, Sheridan said, "Impossible! he is like a horse, — deprive him of his vice and you rob him of his vigour." The merit of Congreve's comedy lies in the dialogue, while the merit of Vanbrugh's play lies rather in the situations; and a cleansing of the conversation of Vanbrugh's play, although it scoured off many spangles, still left the stuff strong enough for ordinary wear. And it is a fact that although in the beginning the 'Trip to Scarborough' was a great disappointment to those

who had hoped much from the new manager's first play, it was not at all a failure, for it soon recovered its ground and held its own for years. Geneste accepts it as one of the very best adaptations of old comedy, and declares that "Sheridan has retained everything in the original that was worth retaining, has omitted what was exceptionable, and has improved it by what he has added." Much of its success was due, no doubt, to the skill with which it was fitted to the chief actors of the company, Lord Foppington being played by Dodd, Miss Hoyden by Mrs. Abington, and Amanda by Mrs. Robinson, the beautiful Perdita, whom Sheridan had coaxed back to the stage.

Like Shakspeare and like Molière, Sheridan was both author and manager, and like them he wrote parts to suit his players. Of this the 'School for Scandal' is a far better instance than the 'Trip to Scarborough.' Made out of two earlier drafts of plays, condensed by infinite labour from a mass of inchoate material, toiled over incessantly, polished and burnished until it shone again, the 'School for Scandal' was at last announced before the whole play was in the hands of the actors — an incident repeated with the 'Critic,' and again with 'Pizarro.' At the end of the hurriedly finished rough draft of the fifth act, Moore found a "curious specimen of doxology, written hastily, in the handwriting of the respective parties": —

"Finished at last, thank God!

"R. B. SHERIDAN."

"Amen!

"W. HOPKINS" [the prompter].

The 'School for Scandal' was first performed May 8, 1777, a little less than a year after the purchase from Garrick. The acting of the comedy was beyond all praise. Geneste remarks that "no new performer has ever appeared in any one of the principal characters, that was not inferior to the person who acted it originally." The success of the comedy itself was instant, and it has been lasting.

It is at once Sheridan's masterpiece, and the chief English comedy of the eighteenth century. It was acted twenty times till the end of the season, and the next year sixty-five. It drew better houses than any other piece; indeed, it killed all competition. Dr. Johnson recommended Sheridan for membership in The Club, as the author of the best modern comedy. Lord Byron, in like manner, called it the best comedy. Garrick's opinion of it was equally emphatic; he was proud of the success of his successor both as author and manager; and when one of his many flatterers said that, though this piece was very good, still it was but one piece, and asked what would become of the theatre, now the Atlas that propped the stage had left his station, Garrick retorted quickly that, if that were the case, he had found another Hercules to succeed to the office.

Cumberland was the only one dissatisfied. It is related that he took his children to see it, and when they screamed with delight their irritable father pinched them, exclaiming: "What are you laughing at, my dear little folks? You should not laugh, my angels, there is nothing to laugh at;" adding in an undertone, "Keep still, you little dunces!" When this was reported to Sheridan, he said, "It was ungrateful of Cumberland to have been displeased with his children for laughing at my comedy, for, when I

went to see his tragedy, I laughed from beginning to end." But even Cumberland, in his memoirs, when defending his own use of a screen in the 'West Indian,' took occasion to praise the 'School for Scandal.' "I could name one now living," said he, "who has made such a happy use of his screen in a comedy of the very first merit, that if Aristotle himself had written a whole chapter professedly against screens, and Jerry Collier had edited it, with notes and illustrations, I would not have placed Lady Teazle out of ear-shot to have saved their ears from the pillory." Sir Walter Scott found in the 'School for Scandal' the gentlemanlike ease of Farquhar united to the wit of Congreve. Hazlitt held it to be "the most finished and faultless comedy we have." The verdict of the public did not change as Scott and Hazlitt came to the front, and Garrick and Johnson slowly faded away; it did not change when Scott and Hazlitt in their turn departed; it has not changed since. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, an American critic of the highest culture and the widest experience, Mr. Henry James, referred to the old comedies only to declare that, "for real intellectual effort, the literary atmosphere and tone of society, there has long been nothing like the 'School for Scandal.' It has been played in every English-speaking quarter of the globe, and has helped English wit and taste to make a figure where they would otherwise, perhaps, have failed to excite observation."

During the next season (on October 15, 1778), there was acted a temporary trifle called the 'Camp,' often credited to Sheridan, and even rashly admitted into several editions of his works; in reality it was written by Tickell, who had married Mrs. Sheridan's

sister. On January 20, 1779, David Garrick died, and Sheridan was a chief mourner at the splendid funeral. And on March 2, the monody which Sheridan wrote to Garrick's memory was recited at Drury Lane Theatre by Mrs. Yates, to the accompaniment of appropriate music. This monody is the longest of Sheridan's serious poetic productions, and it is the least interesting and the least satisfactory. He could write a song as well as any one; and he could turn the sharp lines of satire; but a sustained and elevated strain seems too high an effort for his nimble wit. It is written in "the straight-backed measure, with its stately stride," which, as Dr. Holmes reminds us,

"Gave the mighty voice of Dryden scope;
It sheathed the steel-bright epigrams of Pope."

Now Sheridan had not a mighty voice; and steel-bright epigrams would have been out of place over the grave of Garrick. There is a want of real feeling in these verses; there is no depth in them, and little heart. There is cleverness, of course, and in plenty; but even of this not as much as might have been expected. One looks in vain for some characterization of Garrick himself, or for some apt allusion to his chief parts, to his private character, to his writings, to his position as a man of the world and as a man of letters. Instead, we have cold and elaborate declamation on the transitory nature of the actor's art. This comparison of the histrionic with other arts, pictorial and plastic, had been made in verse by Garrick himself in the prologue to the 'Clandestine Marriage':—

"The painter's dead, yet still he charms the eye,
While England lives his fame can never die;

But he who struts his hour upon the stage
Can scarce protract his fame through half an age ;
Nor pen nor pencil can the actor save ;
The art and artist have one common grave."

It is this assertion of Garrick's and Sheridan's, it may be, that Campbell answered in his verses to Kemble : —

" For ill can Poetry express
Full many a tone of thought sublime ;
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Steals but a glance of time.
But by the mighty actor brought,
Illusion's perfect triumphs come ;
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculpture to be dumb."

Although the ' Monody on Garrick ' is somewhat laboured, it does not lack fine lines. Especially good is Sheridan's use of a chance remark made by Burke at Garrick's funeral, that the statue of Shakspeare looked toward Garrick's grave. On this stray hint Sheridan hung this couplet : —

" While Shakspeare's image, from its hallowed base,
Seemed to prescribe the grave, and point the place."

After the death of Garrick, Sheridan made only one important contribution to dramatic literature, the farce of the ' Critic ; or a Tragedy Rehearsed,' produced October 30, 1779. It shows great versatility of wit in a dramatist to have written three plays strong enough to last a hundred years and more, and as unlike one another as the ' Rivals,' the ' School for Scandal,' and the ' Critic.' As different from its two predecessors as they are from each other, the ' Critic ' is frankly a farce ; it has something of the breadth of the ' Rivals,' and not a little of the point

of the 'School for Scandal'; it sets the model of high-class farce; and as a farce it has but two rivals in our drama — one, the 'Katherine and Petruchio,' which David Garrick made out of Shakspeare's 'Taming of the Shrew,' and the other, 'High Life Below Stairs' (possibly Garrick's own handiwork, although problematically ascribed to a Rev. James Townley).

The 'Critic' was the fifth and last play of its author. It had been preceded by the 'Rivals,' 'St. Patrick's Day,' the 'Duenna,' and the 'School for Scandal'; and with these it constitutes Sheridan's title to fame as a dramatist. Afterward he put his name to 'Pizarro,' and the public chose to attach it to the 'Camp,' to the 'Stranger,' to 'Robinson Crusoe,' and to the 'Forty Thieves.' But he was not the author of any one of these in the same sense that he was the author of the 'Critic' and of its predecessors, or, indeed, in any strict sense of the word whatever. 'Pizarro' was avowedly an adaptation from the German of Kotzebue; as Sheridan knew no German, his share of the work at best was but the altering of the ready-made translation, and the strengthening of Rolla's part by the addition of patriotic harangues taken from Sheridan's own political speeches. It is to be noted, however, that 'Pizarro' was perhaps the most profitable play produced during Sheridan's management of Drury Lane. It was first acted May 24, 1799; it was performed thirty-one times in less than six weeks; it took the King to the theatre for the first time in years; nineteen editions of a thousand copies each were sold in rapid succession; and Sheridan got two thousand guineas for the copyright. The 'Camp,' although printed among his works, was not his, as we have seen. Sheridan's share in the

'Stranger' was but little more than a very careful shaping of the somewhat redundant and exuberant prose of the translator, Benjamin Thompson, to the exigencies of the stage. His contributions to the spectacular and very successful 'Forty Thieves,' and to the pantomime of 'Robinson Crusoe,' were confined to a hasty sketch of the plot; as manager of the theatre he knew what he wanted, and he drafted his suggestions on paper, leaving to other hands the details of elaboration.

Thus the 'Critic' remains really Sheridan's latest contribution to the stage. While retaining his vast pecuniary interest in Drury Lane Theatre and keeping up an active interest in the drama, he longed for a larger stage on which to show his brilliant abilities in the eyes of all his countrymen. He was not desirous of wholly giving up literature for politics. He intended, rather—like Canning in the next generation and Disraeli still later—to use literature as a stepping-stone to politics, and as a support after he had taken the decisive step. His time soon came. His 'Critic' was brought out near the end of October, 1779, and before the end of October, 1780, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, as one of the members for Stafford, had taken his seat in Parliament by the side of his friends Charles Fox and Edmund Burke.

Before leaving Sheridan the dramatist, to consider briefly the career of Sheridan the politician, mention must be made of projected and unfinished dramas he left behind him. In 1768, when he was only seventeen, he planned a play out of the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' Among his papers Moore found the rough draft of three acts of a musical drama, wild in subject and apparently satiric in intent, and he quotes several pages of it, including one song which was

suggested by a sonnet of Sir Philip Sidney's; the general scheme seems to be borrowed from the 'Goblins' of Sir John Suckling. Later than this unfinished opera-book, and apparently evolved from it with much modification, was a play called the 'Foresters.' Moore could find only crude fragments of this piece, yet the Octogenarian who has since written Sheridan's life asserts that at least two acts were wholly completed, having been read both to him and by him. This later biographer it is who fixes the date of this piece as just after his second marriage, 1795. Most to be regretted, however, is the comedy of 'Affectation,' in the composition of which he had advanced no farther than the jotting down of many memorandums. These stray notes do not preserve a single scene or any vestige of a plot; they record only a few embryos of character, and germs of jests and jokes. Affectation was a subject as fertile as Scandal, and as suitable to Sheridan's gifts; he excelled in the art of setting up a profile figure and sending successive bullets through its heart. With a target like Affectation he could have been relied on to ring the bell every time off-hand. Yet it may be questioned whether Sheridan, even under other circumstances, would ever have taken heart and given his mind to the finishing of this comedy. Molière used to turn aside compliments on his work with a "Wait until you see my 'Homme de Cour.' " So Sheridan used to say, "Wait till you see my 'Foresters.' " But we may well doubt whether he ever really intended to finish and polish and produce either the 'Foresters' or 'Affectation.' Like Rossini after 'William Tell,' Sheridan, after the 'School for Scandal,' was content to quit work and to bask lazily in the sunshine of his reputation. As Scott said of

Campbell, Sheridan was "afraid of the shadow that his own fame cast before him." And Michael Kelly records that when he heard that Sheridan had told the Queen he had a new comedy in preparation, he, Kelly, took occasion to say to him, Sheridan, "You will never write again; you are afraid to write."

Sheridan fixed his penetrating eye on Kelly and asked, "Of whom am I afraid?"

And Kelly retorted quickly:—

"You are afraid of the author of the 'School for Scandal.'"

III.

When Sheridan entered the House of Commons in 1780, the chosen representative of the independent borough of Stafford, as Mr. Rae reminds us, "William Pitt took his seat for the first time as the nominee of Sir James Lowther, for the pocket-borough of Appleby." Pitt's first speech was well received. Sheridan's was not. It is easier for an unknown man to succeed in Parliament than a celebrity, for the House is jealous of all reputation got elsewhere. Addison kept silent; Steele was greeted with shouts of "Tatler," "Tatler"; Erskine and Jeffrey and Mackintosh barely held their own in the House; Macaulay and Lytton did little more; Disraeli, like Sheridan, failed at first, and at last became the favourite speaker of the Commons. Sheridan's first speech was made November 20, 1780, and he was heard with great attention. The impression he made was not favourable; to Woodfall, who confessed this to him, he exclaimed vehemently, "It is in me, however, and, by God, it shall come out!"

It will be remembered that Disraeli was ill received, and that he told the stormy House a time would come when they *should* hear him.

Sheridan kept very quiet for a year or more, speaking little, and always precisely and to the point, with no attempt at display. After he had been in Parliament some sixteen months, Lord North's administration was turned out, and the change of ministry which gave peace and independence to these United States of America also gave his first seat in office to Sheridan, who was appointed one of the Under Secretaries of State. The death of the Marquis of Rockingham broke up the new cabinet after a brief life of four months, and although he disapproved of the step, Sheridan loyally followed Fox in resigning. The unwise coalition of Fox with Lord North succeeded in driving Lord Shelburne out of office; and in the new government, Sheridan was Secretary of the Treasury. But in December, 1783, the ministry fell, and Sheridan left office, not to return for nearly twenty years. In 1784, he was reëlected for Stafford, although the unpopularity of the Coalition was so great that no less than one hundred and sixty of its followers were defeated and left with only the barren consolation of calling themselves "Fox's Martyrs."

In June, 1785, Burke gave notice that he would, at a future day, make a motion respecting the conduct of a gentleman just returning from India; and in 1786, he formally impeached Warren Hastings for high crimes and misdemeanours during his rule over hapless India. While it was Burke who, moved by the deepest moral revolt against wrong, inspired and animated the prosecution against Hastings, it was perhaps more due to Sheridan, who had been

gaining steadily as an orator, than to Burke, that public opinion, at first favourable to the defendant, soon shifted against him. Sheridan was a popular speaker; he spoke well and he was listened to with expectation and pleasure. Burke spoke ill; and with so little effect that his opponents thought it needless to answer some of the orations to which men now refer as storehouses of political wisdom. Any comparison of Sheridan's political understanding with Burke's is unkind to the dramatist, who was not a statesman by instinct or by training. But that Sheridan was a better speaker than Burke admits of little doubt. Burke bored his audience; Sheridan charmed, captivated, converted. Burke had a depth and an elevation that Sheridan had not; but Sheridan had the common sense which Burke not infrequently lacked. It was remarked that Burke's notes for the speeches against Hastings were dates, facts, figures; and that Sheridan's were bits of ornamental rhetoric, illustrations, and witticisms. This is not to Sheridan's discredit; each orator had set down what he most needed. Burke could rely on his exuberant imagination and his burning indignation to furnish him with figures of speech; and Sheridan treasured up carefully prepared literary ornaments, sure of himself in any treatment of the facts which his clear mind had once fully mastered by dint of hard labour.

It was on February 7, 1787, that Sheridan, following Burke, brought forward against Hastings the charge relative to the Princesses of Oude, in the speech whose effect upon its hearers, Moore considers to have "no parallel in the annals of ancient or modern eloquence." Burke, enthusiastic for his cause, and generous in his praise, although already

and always jealous of Sheridan, declared it to be "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition." Fox said "that all he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun." And Pitt acknowledged, "that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind." Immediately after the delivery of the speech, an adjournment of the House was moved, on the ground that Sheridan's speech had left such an impression that it was impossible to arrive at a determinate opinion. Unfortunately, no report of this speech exists. There is a wretched summary, with an attempt here and there to record a few of Sheridan's actual words, but the speech itself has not come down to us; and it is unfair to attempt to judge it by the feeble and twisted fragments which remain. It was this speech which made Sheridan's fame as an orator.

The impeachment of Warren Hastings having been voted, Sheridan was appointed one of the managers of the trial before the House of Lords. On June 3, 1787, he began a speech of four days on the charge he had presented in the earlier oration. No harder test of a man's ability could well be devised, than the making of a second speech on a subject which had already called forth the utmost exertion of his powers. Hopeless of the success of a second attempt to hit the midday sun with the same arrow, Fox advised a revision and repetition of the first speech. Sheridan was not the man thus to confess feebleness and exhaustion. He girded

himself for the combat, and was again victorious. Yet, as Walpole explains, he "did not quite satisfy the passionate expectation that had been raised; but it was impossible he could, when people had worked themselves into an enthusiasm of offering fifty guineas for a ticket to hear him." But Burke declared that "of all the various species of oratory that had ever been heard, either in ancient or modern times, whatever the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the senate, or the morality of the pulpit, could furnish, had not been equal to what that House had heard that day in Westminster Hall." Burke was then Sheridan's political friend; but Wraxall, who was his political opponent and who had heard this speech, records "that the most ardent admirers of Burke, of Fox, and of Pitt, allowed that they had been outdone as orators by Sheridan."

This speech has fortunately been preserved to us in the shorthand report of the trial, taken by Mr. Gurney's reporters and published at the suggestion of the late Sir George Cornwall Lewis. Unfortunately, an earlier perversion of the oration, due to the imaginative inaccuracy of a reporter of the old school of Dr. Johnson, has gained almost universal acceptance, to the lowering of Sheridan's reputation as an orator. It is this ludicrously inexact report which figures as the real oration in both of the collections of Sheridan's speeches. True it is, that Sheridan was artificial and that he was frequently guilty of the oratorical and architectural fault of constructing his ornament instead of ornamenting his construction. But he was wholly incapable of the bathos and bombast of the speech which is only too often quoted as his. The prime quality of his oratory was its common-sense. The prime defect was

its exuberance of rhetoric: it might be said of him, as Joubert said of a French orator, that "his speech is flowery, but his flowers are not a natural growth; they are rather like the paper-flowers one finds in shops." This seems a minor failing when we recall Sheridan's possession of the one absolute essential of the orator — he was persuasive. Sir Gilbert Minto records that Pitt was waked up at seven in the morning to see a man who was supposed to be bringing news of a victory, but who "told Mr. Pitt that he had travelled all night from Brighton, that his name was Jenkins and his business not about the navy, but the army, which he had a plan for recruiting. He had been reading 'Pizarro,' and was persuaded that Rolla's first speech was irresistible; that he had read it to numbers at Brighton, and to all he met in the way. Every soul felt its power, and had enlisted. Here he produced a list of all their names, and insisted that if empowered, he could soon raise two hundred thousand men." Now Rolla's first speech was a recasting of one of Sheridan's own speeches in the House. Sheridan was not only a born orator; he was a very carefully trained speaker; one may say almost, that he had been bred to the trade. His father taught him oratory when he was a boy; and Dr. Parr bears witness to his schoolboy knowledge of Cicero and Demosthenes. From the time he first came before the public as a speaker, to the end of his career as a politician, he spared no pains to make the best possible appearance.

As oratory is an art, Sheridan's careful preparation should be counted for him, not against him. Most extempore speakers have accumulated a fund of phrases and figures, on which they can draw at will. When Daniel Webster was complimented on

the admirable description of the British drum-tap circling the world with the rising sun, a description seemingly the inspiration of the moment, and called out in an unexpected debate, he confessed frankly that he had first thought of it one morning in a Canadian citadel, and that, taking his seat on a cannon, he had at once given it shape on paper, and then committed it to his capacious memory, where it was stored up, ready for instant use. Sheridan like Webster set down every chance suggestion, and sought to be prepared against the moment of danger. But, however carefully elaborated his epigram might be, there was no trace of the workshop; all the tools were put away, and the shavings swept up. His wit, whether old or new, had always the appearance of spontaneity. No one ever saw the trains which fired the coruscating wheel. Had it not been for Moore's indiscretion, no one would ever have suspected the workshop, the kitchen, or the quick match. And it must be remembered that very few of Sheridan's strokes of wit, and scarcely one of the best of them, could have been considered in advance. When taken unawares he was as ready as when armed for the encounter. There are instances, almost without number, in which the steel of Sheridan's wit struck fire from the chance flint of the moment. -

To say that because Sheridan sometimes used the wit of others, he had none of his own; and that because he always prepared, when possible, he could do naught impromptu, is absurd; — and yet this has been said, now and again. Strike out of his comedies all the jests he may have lifted from his predecessors, and the loss would scarcely be noticed; — we doubt, in fact, whether it would be detected at all, except by professed students of dramatic litera-

ture. Strike out of his record as a speaker in public and in private, all the suggestions derived from others, and again the loss is scarcely to be seen. Sheridan gave to his work the labour of the artist who knows the value of his conception, and seeks to bring out the final perfection. The care he bestowed on the polishing of his diamond till it should be as brilliant and as cutting as possible, led him at times to repeat himself; indeed, in later life he reverted so often to his earlier and easier writings for stones to set more elaborately, that he incurred the reproach of borrowing from himself. Even in the 'Duenna,' more than one song was taken from this or that copy of verses written to Miss Linley, or some other fair lady, during his bachelor days in Bath. The curt assertion that a certain political opponent "relied on his imagination for his facts, and on his memory for his wit," Sheridan tried in several forms before he was finally satisfied with it. It is difficult to say whether this repetition of what he had used once already came more from a desire to leave all his wit in the best shape for posterity, lightened of superfluity, or whether it sprang from his natural laziness, which led him always to fall back on what he had on hand when it was possible to avoid the exertion of originality. So far did he carry this, not only in public, but in private, that, as Harness recorded, he endangered the peace of his household; his second wife was found one day walking up and down her drawing-room, apparently in a frantic state of mind, calling her husband a villain, because, as she explained after some hesitation, she had just discovered that the love letters he sent her were the very same as those which he had written to his first wife. As one of his critics has remarked, "It is

singular enough that the treasures of wit which Sheridan was thought to possess in such profusion, should have been the only species of wealth which he ever dreamt of economizing."

To the quick wit and good humour of Sheridan's conversation we have the testimony of well-nigh all who met him. An easy nature, an unfailing readiness, and an innocent delight in the exercise of his powers, made him a most enjoyable companion, and therefore to be bidden to every conviviality. It is true that Byron tells us that "Sheridan's humour, or rather wit, was always saturnine and sometimes savage. He never laughed, at least that I saw, and I watched him." But Byron saw him only in his soured and tormented age. In his youth, and in early manhood, he was lively and full of fun, abundant in boyish pranks and practical jokes. With Tickell, who had married Mrs. Sheridan's sister, he was ever ready for a fantastic freak, only too often of the practical sort. One Saturday night he volunteered to write a sermon to be preached by a reverend friend visiting him; and it was only months after the clergyman had delivered the admirable discourse on 'The Abuse of Riches,' which Sheridan had spent the evening in composing, that he discovered it to be a covert attack on a local magnate generally accused of ill-treating the poor. In later life, in his sad decadence, after unchecked conviviality had done its work, coming one night very late out of a tavern, he was so overtaken with liquor as to need the aid of passers, who asked his name and abode, and to whom he gravely made answer, "Gentlemen, I am not often in this way; my name is Wilberforce." This is a reckless jest, at which even M. Taine, nowhere disposed to be over-amiable to Sheridan,

smiles perforce. A man capable of practical jokes likes these, even in his saddest age, is as far removed as may be from moroseness. Sydney Smith's opinion lies directly across Byron's; "the charm of Sheridan's speaking," said he, "was his multifariousness of style." Now, a man savage, saturnine, or morose can hardly have a multifariousness of style in speaking; and one is at a loss to account for Byron's assertion. Sydney Smith has been cited, because, like Byron, he met Sheridan only when the author of the 'School for Scandal' was old and worn and wearied. In his bright and brilliant youth, after he had suddenly from nothing sprung to the front, and the ball lay at his feet, he was everywhere hailed as a wit of the first water. Lord John Townshend made a dinner party for Fox to meet Sheridan; and he records: "The first interview between them I shall never forget. Fox told me, after breaking up from dinner, that he had always thought Hare, after my uncle Charles Townshend, the wittiest man he ever met with, but that Sheridan surpassed them both infinitely." And this, let it be noted, was after the host had specially raised Fox's expectations by dwelling at length on Sheridan's extraordinary powers.

Unless Sheridan's manner when Byron was present was unusual, or unless he had changed unaccountably with the thickening years, Sydney Smith's opinion is more to be relied on than the poet's. And Sydney Smith, it is to be remembered, is one who had wit enough of his own to appreciate Sheridan's. There is indeed one quality in which the dramatist and the Dean were alike. Lord Dudley said to the latter, — "You have been laughing at me constantly, Sydney, for the last seven years, and yet in all that

time, you never said a single thing to me that I wished unsaid." In like manner, Sheridan was ever girding at Michael Kelly, — "Composer of Wines and Importer of Music," — and yet his cuts were kindly and left no scar; and nowhere is Sheridan treated with more honest affection than in Kelly's recollections. Sydney Smith's wit has been compared to "summer lightning, that never harmed the object illumined by its flash"; and to continue the parallel, in the verses Moore wrote just after Sheridan's death, he declared him one

" Whose humour, as gay as the fire-fly's light,
 Played round every subject, and shone as it played;
Whose wit, in the combat as gentle as bright,
 Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade."

Even in political debate, however sharp or acrimonious, Sheridan seems ever to have been courteous to his adversary; and although every shot hit its mark with fatal effect, there was no mangling of the corpse; he never made use of explosive bullets. However keen his thrust and his enjoyment of it, there was nothing vindictive or malignant to be detected. Even when his great rival, Burke, moved partly, it may be, by jealousy, but mainly, no doubt, by growing political distrust, broke with his friends and crossed over to the ministerial benches, with the cry, "I quit the camp," — Sheridan did not hasten to seize the occasion for taunting invective; he only hoped that as the Honourable Gentleman had quitted the camp as a deserter, he would never attempt to return as a spy.

Sheridan's oratory was like his dramatic writing and his poetry, in that all three things, speeches, plays, poems, are only varied forms of expression for

the wit which was his chief characteristic. After he entered public life, and until he fell under the evil influence of the Prince of Wales, his wit and his oratory were always used in the good cause. Like Burke, Sheridan was at once a true Irishman and an English patriot. In the preface of the 'Rivals,' he declares his attachment to Ireland; and at all times throughout his career he could be relied on to do whatever in him lay for the greater honour, dignity, and peace of the British empire. When the French Revolution came and "the great army of the indolent good, the people who lead excellent lives and never use their reason, took violent alarm," and when in 1793 Pitt, to use Mr. Morley's apt expression, "lost his feet, though he did not lose his head," Sheridan stood with Fox by "the old flag of freedom and generous common-sense." When the country really was in danger from French aggression in 1799, Sheridan did not falter; and, as we have seen, 'Pizarro' was worth many a recruit. And when the mutiny at the Nore broke out, Sheridan sacrificed party to patriotism, and gave prompt aid to the putting down of the revolt in a manner creditable alike to his heart and his head, and in marked contrast with the conduct of other politicians then, like him, in opposition.

IV.

From his marriage and the production of the 'Rivals' to the trial of Warren Hastings, Sheridan's position and reputation had been steadily rising. For a while they maintained themselves at the exalted level to which they had attained. But slowly the good fortune which had waxed began in time to wane.

In 1788, Sheridan's father died, and in 1792 Sheridan's wife died also, to his great grief. Moore and Smythe bear witness to the strength of Sheridan's love for his wife, and to the depth of his sorrow at her loss. Had she lived, perhaps Sheridan's later life would have been other than it was; one may at least hazard this suggestion. While she was yet alive, Sheridan had begun to yield to the temptations of society, to live beyond his means, and to neglect the business of the theatre. After her death these bad habits grew on him, and became inveterate. Unfortunately there was never greater need of exactness and economy than then, for the Drury Lane Theatre was condemned by the architects and torn down; and the money to erect a new theatre had to be raised by the issue of £150,000 in debentures of £500 each. Pending the rebuilding, the company performed at the Opera-House, and later at the Haymarket. Unexpected delay in the completion of the new theatre caused great loss, and began that accumulation of indebtedness which was not to be cleared off during Sheridan's life. At last the house was complete; and on April 21, 1794, it was opened with a performance of 'Macbeth.' A few weeks later, on the receipt of the news of Lord Howe's victory, Sheridan brought out an occasional piece, called 'The Glorious First of June,' sketched by himself, written, rehearsed, and produced in three days.

In the spring of 1795, Sheridan was married to Miss Ogle, a young daughter of the Dean of Winchester, having settled upon her, as a condition precedent to the wedding, a sum of £15,000, raised by debentures on the theatre. During the next few years his difficulties increased. At last, in 1802, came a final blow. The theatre was burnt to the

ground. As the glare of the burning building lighted up the House of Commons, where Sheridan sat in silence, a motion was made to adjourn, out of regard for Sheridan, who opposed it, hoping that whatever might be the extent of his private calamity it would not interfere with the public business of the country. There seems to be a doubt whether he remained thereafter at his post in the House, or whether he went to the scene of his loss and the theatre of his triumphs. After the destruction of Drury Lane, Sheridan was a ruined man. Whitbread took charge of the erection of the new theatre ; an act of Parliament was passed enabling it to be rebuilt by subscriptions ; Sheridan was paid £28,000 for his interest in the property, and his son Thomas £12,000 for his quarter share. But this was conditional on Sheridan's absolute abandonment of all connection with the theatre ; and Whitbread enforced this stipulation with pitiless exactness. Whitbread was the one man whose heart was too hard even for Sheridan to soften. It was three years before Sheridan set foot in the play-house he had ruled for twenty-five of the most prosperous and glorious years of its career. Deprived of the revenues of the theatre, and sinking deeper into embarrassment, he was at last unable to raise the money needed for his election at Stafford. In 1812 he made his final speech in the House of Commons ; it was a warning against the rapacious designs of Napoleon. From this time, Moore tells us, " the distresses of Sheridan now increased every day, and through the short remainder of his life it is a melancholy task to follow him." He was forced to sell his books, his plate, his pictures, and even to part with the portrait of Mrs. Sheridan by Sir Joshua Reynolds. In the spring of 1815 came

“one of the most humiliating trials of his pride”; “he was arrested and carried to a sponging-house, where he remained two or three days.” That Sheridan should have been neglected in this condition by the Prince whom he had served to his own discredit, is only what one might have expected from the First Gentleman in Europe; but there are those who declare that a sum of money, about £3000, was sent Sheridan by the Prince, although it was “either attached by his creditors, or otherwise dissipated in such manner that very little of it actually reached its destination.” It is to be remembered that he had no pension like Burke, and that no public or private subscription was ever taken up for Sheridan as it was for Pitt and Fox, for Lamartine and for Daniel Webster. It must be remembered, too, that the settlement on the second Mrs. Sheridan was £15,000, and that Sheridan’s debts at his death were found to be less than £5000 — far less than the debts of Fox or Pitt; and these debts were paid by the family. The anonymous Octogenarian, in whose biography is to be found the best account of Sheridan’s last hours, describes Mrs. Sheridan’s grief and her constant attention in his last days. Peter Moore, Dr. Bain, and Samuel Rogers were also true to their fast-failing friend. None the less is it a fact, that he was under arrest when he was dying, “on a writ issued at a time when the invalid was in a state of unconsciousness.” Fortunately, the sheriff’s officer had a kind heart, and, as the custodian of the dying man, he protected him against any other suit which might be urged against him. Mrs. Sheridan sent for the Bishop of London to read prayers for him, but Sheridan was wholly insensible. At nine o’clock on the morning of Sunday, July 7, 1816, he said “Good-by”;

these were his last words. He sank rapidly, and died at twelve noon.

On the following Saturday, July 13, the body of the man who had died in neglect was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey, with dukes and earls as pall-bearers, and with a long string of royal and noble mourners.

V.

Sheridan's character is enigmatic; it is not to be read off-hand and at random; it is complicated and unequal; and it is to be understood and explained only at the cost of effort. Sheridan was good-natured and warm-hearted; he never did any one an intentional injury; but he brought trouble on all who trusted him. While he was gentle, kind, and affectionate, his wife had reason to feel neglected, and his father parted from him in anger. He earned enormous sums of money, and his advice to others was always admirable; but his own affairs were in ever increasing confusion. He was always involved in debt; yet his accounts as a government officer were scrupulously accurate. To continue the antithesis would be easy, for the story of his life is a series of antitheses; but to suggest a clue to the labyrinth of his character is not so easy. It is to be sought in the uncommon conjunction in Sheridan of two irreconcilable things, a very high standard of morals with an absence of training and discipline. The latter failing vitiated the former virtue. Incapable of keeping himself up in the clear air and on the high level of exalted principle to which he aspired, he was far less careful in the ordinary duties of life than are those whose aim is not so lofty. When he

found that he could not attain the high standard he had set before him, he cared little how much he fell short of it — and so sank below the ethical mean of ordinary mortals. There was nothing venal or sordid about him; he was liked by all, though all who liked him did not respect him; he was a humorist even in his code of morality. He always meant well, but while the spirit might be willing the flesh was often weak. He intended to be not merely generous with everybody, but also absolutely honest and upright; his heart was in the right place, as the saying is, but his views were too magnificent for his means; and he had neither self-denial nor self-discipline. When, therefore, he had once put himself in a position where he was unable to do exactly what he had agreed to do, and what he always desired to do, he ceased to care whether or not he did all he could. In time this habit grew upon him, and the frequency of failure to accomplish what he had intended, blunted his aspirations. This type of character is not as uncommon as it may seem at first sight. Substantially it does not differ greatly from the Thérèse of ‘*Elle et Lui*,’ which a biographer of George Sand declares to be “a faithful picture of a woman not quite up to the level of her own principles, which are so high that any lapse from them on her part brings down more disasters on herself and on others than the misdemeanours of avowedly unscrupulous persons.” In Sheridan this type was modified for the worse by an ambition perilously akin to vanity, and by an indolence accompanied by an extraordinary power of hard work whenever spurred to it by an extraordinary motive. This vanity and this indolence were the contending evil spirits who strove for the mastery in Sheridan’s later days. The indo-

lence encouraged his carelessness in money matters ; and the vanity or ambition or pride stiffened his impracticably high code of morality. He was always paying his debts in a large-handed, reckless way, but he was never out of debt. He scorned to examine an account or to catechise a claimant ; when he had money he paid, and when he had none, he promised to pay—and he kept his word, if reminded of it when money came in. All, or nearly all, of his shares in the rebuilt theatre were given to creditors without any question as to their claims. Sheridan stripped himself and died in poverty and left but few creditors unpaid. From sheer heedlessness he probably had paid far more than he actually owed ; but he never made an effort to investigate his liabilities, or to set them off against his assets to see the exact state of his affairs. He had not the mercantile morality, as he had not the mercantile training, which would have stood him in good stead so often in his checkered career. But he had personal morality in money matters, and he had political morality. His nice sense of honour led him to withdraw his wife from the concert-stage as soon as they were married. He told a creditor who had his bond, and who found him in unexpected possession of money, that he had to use the money to meet a debt of honour ; whereupon the creditor burnt his bond before his face and declared his debt was thereafter a debt of honour, and Sheridan paid it at once. In his political career he more than once sacrificed place to principle.

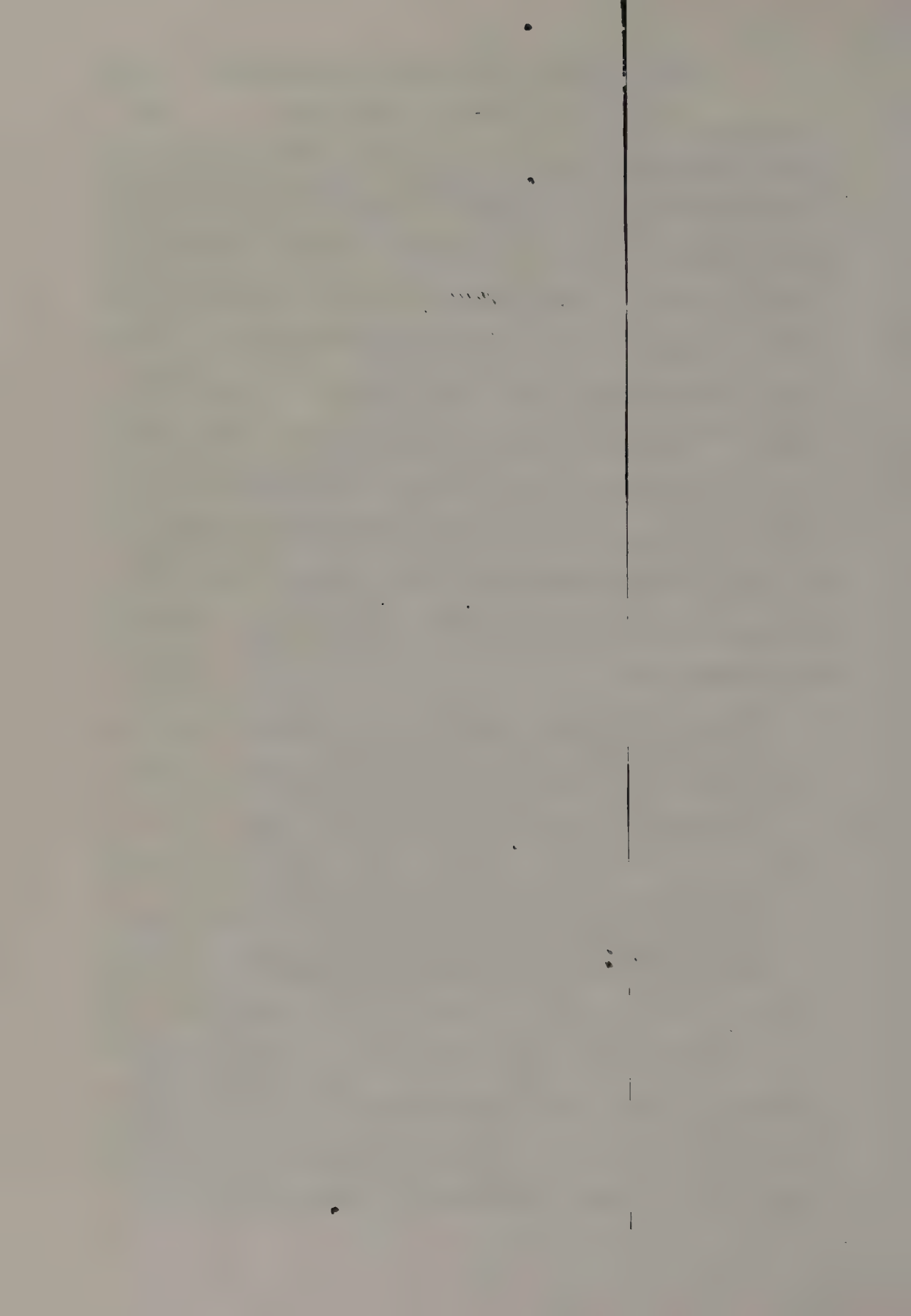
As Carlyle says of Schiller, "We should not lightly think of comprehending the very simplest character in all its bearings ; and it might well argue vanity to boast of even a common acquaintance with one like" Sheridan's, which was even

more complex and problematic than Schiller's. "Such men as he are misunderstood by their daily companions, much more by the distant observer, who gleans his information from scanty records and casual notices of characteristic events, which biographers are often too indolent or injudicious to collect, and which the peaceful life of a man of letters usually supplies in little abundance." From this injudicious indolence of biographers no man has suffered more than Richard Brinsley Sheridan. And for this there is no better corrective than a reading of the 'Monody on the Death of Sheridan,' which Byron wrote, to be delivered at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre in the autumn. Two extracts from this poem may serve fitly to close this brief and hasty summary of Sheridan's career and character:—

" But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing wisdom yields a base delight —
Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own —
Still let them pause — ah! little do they know
That what to them seemed vice might be but woe.

* * * * *

Long shall we seek his likeness, long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that nature formed but one such man,
And broke the die, in moulding Sheridan! "



THE RIVALS.

THE RIVALS.

IN the days now departed, and perhaps forever, when every town in this broad land had its theatre, with its own stock-company of actors and actresses, the manager was wont once and away to announce, with more or less flourish of trumpets, and as though he were doing a most meritorious thing, a series of old-comedy revivals. Whenever the announcement was put forth, the regular playgoer retired within himself, and made ready for an intellectual treat. If you asked the regular playgoer for a list of the Old Comedies, it was odds that he rattled off, glibly enough, first, the 'School for Scandal,' second, 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and third, the 'Rivals.' After these he might hesitate, but if you pushed him to the wall, he would name a few more plays, of which 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts' was the oldest and 'Money' the youngest. Leaving the regular playgoer, and investigating for yourself, you will find that the Old Comedies are mostly those which, in spite of their being more than a hundred years old, are yet lively and sprightly enough to amuse a modern audience.

The life of a drama, even of a successful drama, is rarely three-score years and ten; and the number of dramas which live to be centenarians is small indeed. In the last century the case was different;

and a hundred years ago the regular playgoer had a chance to see frequently eight or ten pieces by Massinger, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shirley. Nowadays, Shakspeare's are the only Elizabethan plays which keep the stage, with one solitary exception — Massinger's 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts.' The 'Chances,' of Beaumont and Fletcher; the 'City Madam,' of Massinger; and 'Every Man in his Humour,' of Ben Jonson — these have all, one after another, dropped out of sight. The comedies of the eighteenth century have now in their turn become centenarians; of these there are half a score which have a precarious hold on the theatre, and are seen at lengthening intervals; and there are half a dozen which hold their own firmly. Of this scant half-dozen, the 'School for Scandal' is, perhaps, in the greatest request, followed closely by 'She Stoops to Conquer' and the 'Rivals.' Of late the 'Rivals' has been seen most often in these United States, since Mr. Joseph Jefferson, laying aside the accent and the tatters of that ne'er-do-weel, Rip Van Winkle, has taken on the counterfeit presentment of Bob Acres, full of strange oaths and of a most valiant bearing; and he was long aided and abetted by that sterling artist, Mrs. John Drew, as the voluble Mrs. Malaprop.

The 'Rivals' was Sheridan's first play; it was produced at Covent Garden, January 17, 1775. Like the first plays of many another dramatist who has afterward succeeded abundantly, it failed dismally on its first performance, and again on the second, the night after. It was immediately withdrawn; in all probability, it was somewhat rewritten; and of a certainty it was very much shortened. Then, on January 28, after a ten days' absence

from the bills, it reappeared, with Mr. Clinch in the place of Mr. Lee, as Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Moore remarks that as comedy, more than any other species of composition, requires "that knowledge of human nature and the world which experience alone can give,—it seems not a little extraordinary that nearly all our first-rate comedies should have been the productions of very young men." Moore then cites Farquhar, and Vanbrugh, and especially Congreve, all of whose comedies were written before he was twenty-five. It is these three writers who gave the stamp to English comedy; and Sheridan's die was not unlike theirs. Now, a consideration of the fact that English comedy is thus, in a measure, the work of young men, may tend to explain at once its failings and its force. As Lessing says: "Who has nothing can give nothing. A young man, just entering upon the world himself, cannot possibly know and depict the world." And this is just the weak point of English comedy; it is brilliant and full of dash, and it carries itself bravely, but it does not show an exact knowledge of the world, and it does not depict with precision. "The greatest comic genius," Lessing adds, "shows itself empty and hollow in its youthful works." Empty and hollow are harsh words to apply to English comedy; but it is easy to detect, behind all its glitter and sparkle, a want of depth, a superficiality, which is not far from the emptiness and hollowness of which Lessing speaks. Compare this English comedy of Congreve and of Sheridan, which is a battle of the wits, with the broader and more human comedy of Molière and of Shakspeare, and it is easy to see what Lessing means. In place of a liberal humanity, is an exuberance of youthful

fancy and wit, delighting in its exercise. What gives value to these early plays, and especially to Sheridan's, is the touch of the true dramatist to be seen in them; and the dramatist is like the poet in so far that he is born, not made.

"A dramatic author," says the younger Alexandre Dumas, "as he advances in life, can acquire higher thoughts, can develop a higher philosophy, can conceive and execute works of stronger tissue, than when he began; in a word, the matter he can cast into his mould will be nobler and richer, but the mould will be the same." Dumas proceeded to show how the first plays of Corneille, of Molière, and of Racine, from a technical point of view, are as well constructed as the latest. So it is with Congreve, and Vanbrugh, and Farquhar, and Sheridan; they gave up the stage before they had great experience of the world; but they were born dramatists. All their comedies were made in the head, not in the heart. But made where or how you please, they are well made. It is impossible to deny that the 'Rivals,' however hollow or empty it may appear on minute critical inspection, is a very extraordinary production for a young man of twenty-three.

Humour ripens slowly, but in the case of Sheridan some forcing-house of circumstance seems to have brought it to an early maturity, not so rich, perhaps, or so mellow as it might have become with time, and yet full of a flavour of its own. Strangely enough, the early 'Rivals' is more humorous and less witty than the later 'School for Scandal,' — perhaps because the humour of the 'Rivals' is rather the frank feeling for fun and appreciation of the incongruous (both of which may be youthful qualities) than the deeper and broader humour which we see at its full in Molière and Shakspeare.

So we have the bold outlines of Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres, personages having only a slight likeness to nature, and not always even consistent to their own projection, but strong in comic effect and abundantly laughter-compelling. They are caricatures, if you will, but caricatures of great force, full of robust fun, tough in texture, and able to stand by themselves, in spite of any artistic inequality. Squire Acres is a country gentleman of limited intelligence, incapable of acquiring, even by contagion, the curious system of referential swearing by which he gives variety to his speech. But "odds, bullets, and blades!" as he says, his indeterminate valour is so aptly utilized, and his ultimate poltroonery in the duel scene is so whimsically developed, and so sharply contrasted with the Irish assurance and ease of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, that he would be a hard-hearted critic indeed who could taunt Mr. Acres with his artistic short-comings. And it surely takes a very acute mind to blunder so happily in the "derangement of epitaphs" as does Mrs. Malaprop; she must do it with malice prepense, and as though she, and not her niece, were as "headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile." It is only a sober second thought, however, which allows us to "cast aspersions on her parts of speech." While Bob Acres and Mrs. Malaprop are before us we accept them as they are; and here we touch what was at once Sheridan's weakness and his strength, which lay side by side. He sought, first of all, theatrical effect; dramatic excellence was a secondary and subservient consideration. On the stage, where all goes with a snap, consistency of character is not as important as distinctness of drawing. The attributes of a character may be incongruous if they make

the character itself more readily recognizable ; and the attention of the spectator may be taken from the incongruity by humour of situation and quickness of dialogue. Acres's odd oaths are no great strain on consistency, and they help to fix him in our memory. Mrs. Malaprop's ingenuity in dislocating the dictionary is very amusing, and Sheridan did not hesitate to invent extravagant blunders for her, any more than he hesitated to lend his own wit to Fag and David, the servants, who were surely as incapable of appreciating it as they were of inventing it. After all, Sheridan had to live on his wit ; and he wrote his plays to make money by its display. And the more of himself he put into each of his characters, the more brilliant the play. To say this is, of course, to say that Sheridan belongs in the second rank of comedy writers, with Congreve and Regnard, and not in the class with Shakspeare and Molière. But humour and an insight into human nature are not found united with the play-making faculty once in a century ; there is only one Shakspeare, and only one Molière. It is well that a quick wit and a lively fancy can amuse us not unsatisfactorily, and that, in default of Shakspeare and Molière, we have at least Beaumarchais and Sheridan.

It is well that Sheridan wrote the 'Rivals' just when he did, or else both wit and humour might have been banished from the English stage for years. That there was ever any danger of English comedy stiffening itself into prudish priggishness it is not easy now to credit ; but in the eighteenth century the danger was real. A school of critics had arisen who prescribed that comedy should be genteel, and that it should eschew all treatment of ordinary human nature, confining itself chiefly to sentiment

in high life. A school of dramatists, beginning with Steele (whom it is sad to see in such company), and including Cumberland and Hugh Kelly, taught by example what these critics set forth by precept. The bulk of playgoers were never converted to these principles, but they obtained in literary society and were, for the moment, fashionable. There were not lacking those who protested. Fielding, who had studied out something of the secret of Molière's humour in the adaptations he made from the author of the 'Miser,' had no sympathy with the new school; and when he came to write his great novel, 'Tom Jones,' he had a sly thrust or two at the fashion. He introduces to us, for example, a puppet-show which was performed "with great regularity and decency. It was called the fine and serious part of the 'Provoked Husband,' and it was indeed a very grave and solemn entertainment, without any low wit, or humour, or jests; or, to do it no more than justice, anything which could provoke a laugh. The audience were all highly pleased."

'Tom Jones' was published in 1749; and in 1773 Sentimental-Comedy still survived, and was ready to sneer at Goldsmith's 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and to call its hearty and almost boisterous humour "low." But Tony Lumpkin's country laugh cleared the atmosphere. Sentimental-Comedy had received a deadly blow. Some months before 'She Stoops to Conquer' was brought out, Foote had helped to make the way straight for a revival of true comedy, whereat a man might venture to laugh, by announcing a play for his "Primitive Puppet-show," called the 'Handsome Housemaid, or Piety in Pattens,' which was to illustrate how a maiden of low degree, by the mere effects of her morality and virtue, raised

herself to honour and riches. In his life of Garrick, Tom Davies tells us that 'Piety in Pattens' killed Sentimental-Comedy, although until then Hugh Kelly's 'False Delicacy' had been the favourite play of the times. It is, perhaps, true that Foote scotched the snake; it is certain, however, that it was Sheridan who killed it. Two years after Goldsmith and Foote came Sheridan; and after the 'Rivals' there was little chance for Sentimental-Comedy. Moore prints passages from an early sketch of a farce, from which we can see that Sheridan never took kindly to the sentimental school. Yet so anxious was he for the success of the 'Rivals,' and so important was this success to him, that he attempted to conciliate the wits and fine ladies who were bitten by the current craze; at least it is difficult to see any other reason for the characters of Julia and Faulkland, so different from all Sheridan's other work, and so wholly wanting in the sparkle in which he excelled. And the calculation was seemingly not unwise; the scenes between Julia and Faulkland, to which we now listen with dumb impatience, and which Mr. Jefferson, in his version of the piece, has trimmed away, were received with delight. John Bernard, who was at one time secretary of the Beef-steak Club, and afterward one of the first of American managers, records in his amusing 'Retrospections' that the audience at the first performance of the 'Rivals' contained "two parties—those supporting the prevailing taste, and those who were indifferent to it, and liked nature. On the first night of a new play it was very natural that the former should predominate, and what was the consequence? Why, that Faulkland and Julia (which Sheridan had obviously introduced to conciliate the sentimental-

ists, but which, in the present day, are considered incumbrances) were the characters most favourably received, whilst Sir Anthony Absolute, Bob Acres, and Lydia, those faithful and diversified pictures of life, were barely tolerated."

But the sentimentalists were afterward present in diminishing force ; and the real success of the comedy came from those who could appreciate its fun and who were not too genteel to laugh. So Sheridan, writing a new prologue to be spoken on the tenth night, drew attention to the figure of Comedy (which stood on one side of the stage, as Tragedy did on the other), and bade the audience

"Look on her well — does she seem form'd to teach?
Should you *expect* to hear this lady — preach?
Is gray experience suited to her youth?
Do solemn sentiments become that mouth?
Yet, thus adorned with every graceful art
To charm the fancy and to reach the heart,
Must we displace her? and instead advance
The goddess of the woful countenance? —
The Sentimental Muse! — Her emblems view —
The 'Pilgrim's Progress' and a sprig of rue!
There fixed in usurpation should she stand,
She'll snatch the dagger from her sister's hand;
And having made her votaries *weep a flood*,
Good heaven! she'll end her comedies in blood!"

Sheridan's use of the figures of Comedy and Tragedy is characteristic of his aptness in turning to his own advantage any accident upon which his quick wit could seize. Characteristic, too, is the willingness to borrow a hint from another. Sheridan was not above taking his matter wherever he found it. Indeed, there are not wanting those who say that Sheridan had nothing of his own, and was barely able to cover his mental nakedness with rags stolen every-

where. John Forster declared that Lydia Languish and her lover owed something to Steele's 'Tender Husband.' Dibdin, in his 'History of the Stage,' says that Lydia was stolen from Colman's Polly Honeycombe. Whipple found that Sir Anthony Absolute was suggested by Smollett's Matthew Bramble; and, improving on this, Thomas Arnold, in the article on English Literature in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, spoke of the 'Rivals' as dug out of 'Humphrey Clinker.' Watkins, Sheridan's first biographer, had already pretended to trace Mrs. Malaprop to a waiting-woman in Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews'; other critics had called her a reproduction of Mrs. Heidelberg, in Colman and Garrick's 'Clandestine Marriage.' And a more recent writer spoke of Theodore Hook's 'Ramsbottom Papers' as containing the original of all the Mrs. Malaprops and Mrs. Partingtons. Not only were the characters thus all copied here and there, but the incidents also are stolen. Moore and Mrs. Inchbald point out that Faulkland's trial of Julia's affection by a pretended danger and need of instant flight, is anticipated both in Prior's 'Nut-brown Maid,' and in Smollett's 'Peregrine Pickle'; and Boaden, in his biography of Kemble, finds the same situation in the 'Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph,' a novel by Sheridan's mother, which was once very popular, but which Sheridan told Rogers he had never read. Not content with thus robbing Sheridan of the constituent parts of his play, an attempt has been made to deprive him of the play itself. Under the head of Literary Gossip, a British weekly called *The Athenæum*, on January 1, 1876, had this paragraph:—

"A very curious and most interesting fact has come to light at the British Museum. Among the collection of old plays

(presented to that institution by Mr. Coventry Patmore in 1864) which formerly belonged to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, has been found the holograph original of the comedy 'The Trip to Bath,' written in 1749, by Mrs. Frances Sheridan, his mother, and which, it is said in Moore's 'Life of Sheridan,' was the source of his play of the 'Rivals.' A very slight comparison of the two plays leaves no doubt whatever of the fact; and in the character of Mrs. Malaprop, Sheridan has actually borrowed some of her amusing blunders from the original Mrs. Tryfort without any alteration whatever."

I have massed these accusations together to meet them with a general denial. I have compared Sheridan's characters and incidents with the so-called originals; and I confess that I can see very little likeness in any case, and no ground at all for a charge of plagiarism. It is not that Sheridan was at all above borrowing from his neighbour: it is that in the 'Rivals' he did not so borrow, or that his borrowings are trifling and trivial both in quantity and quality. Polly Honeycombe, for example, is like Lydia Languish in her taste for novel-reading, in her romantic notions, and in nothing else; Polly figures in farce, and Lydia in high comedy; Polly is a shopkeeper's daughter, and Lydia has the fine airs of good society. It is as hard to see a likeness between Polly and Lydia, as it is to see just what Sheridan owes to Steele's 'Tender Husband.' The accusation that the 'Rivals' is indebted to 'Humphrey Clinker' is absurd; Sir Anthony Absolute is not at all like Mr. Matthew Bramble; indeed, in all of Smollett's novel, of which the humour is so rich, not to say oily, there is nothing which recalls Sheridan's play, save possibly Mistress Tabitha Bramble, who is an old woman, anxious to marry, and mistaking a proposal for her niece to be one for her own hand, and who blunders in her phrases. How

far, however, from Sheridan's neat touch is Smollett's coarse stroke! "Mr. Gwynn," says Mistress Tabitha to Quin the actor, "I was once vastly entertained with your playing the 'Ghost of Gimlet' at Drury Lane, when you rose up through the stage with a white face and red eyes, and spoke of *quails upon the frightful porcupine*." Mrs. Slipslop, in 'Joseph Andrews,' has also a misapplication of words, but never so aptly incongruous and so exactly inaccurate as Mrs. Malaprop. This trick of speech is all either Mistress Bramble or Mrs. Slipslop have in common with Mrs. Malaprop; and Mrs. Heidelberg has not even this. The charge that Mrs. Malaprop owes aught to Theodore Hook is highly comic and preposterous, as Hook was born in 1788, and published the 'Ramsbottom Papers' between 1824 and 1828—say half a century after Mrs. Malaprop had proved her claim to immortality. And it is scarcely less comic and preposterous to imagine that Sheridan could have derived the scene between Julia and Faulkland from Prior's 'Nut-brown Maid,' and from Smollett's 'Peregrine Pickle,' and from Mrs. Sheridan's 'Sidney Biddulph'; the situation in the play differs materially from those in the three other productions. Remains only the sweeping charge of *The Athenæum*; and this well-nigh as causeless as the rest. The manuscript of which *The Athenæum* speaks is No. 25,975, and it is called 'A Journey to Bath'; it ends with the third act, and two more are evidently wanting. It is only "a very slight comparison" of this comedy of Mrs. Sheridan's with her son's 'Rivals,' which "leaves no doubt whatever" of the taking of the latter from the former. I have read the 'Journey to Bath' very carefully; it is a rather lively comedy, such as were not uncommon in 1750; and it is wholly

unlike the 'Rivals.' The characters of the 'Journey to Bath' are: Lord Hewkly; Sir Jeremy Bull, Bart.; Sir Jonathan Bull, his brother, a city knight; Edward, son to Sir Jonathan; Champignon; Stapleton; Lady Filmot; Lady Bel Aircastle; Mrs. Tryfort, a citizen's widow; Lucy, her daughter; Mrs. Surface, one who keeps a lodging-house at Bath. Mrs. Surface, it may be noted, is a scandalmonger, who hates scandal; and Sheridan used both the name and the character in his later and more brilliant comedy. In the 'Journey to Bath' and the 'Rivals,' the scenes are laid at Bath; and here the likeness ends—except that Mrs. Tryfort seems to be a sort of first draft of Mrs. Malaprop. It is difficult to doubt that Sheridan had read his mother's comedy and had claimed as his by inheritance this Mrs. Tryfort, who is described by one of the other characters as the "vainest poor creature, and the fondest of hard words, which, without miscalling, she always takes care to misapply." Few of her misapplications, however, are as happy as those of Mrs. Malaprop.

After all, the invention is rather Shakspeare's than Mrs. Sheridan's. Mrs. Malaprop is but Dogberry in petticoats. And the fault of which Whipple accused Sheridan may be laid at Shakspeare's door also. Whipple called Mrs. Malaprop's mistakes "too felicitously infelicitous to be natural," and declares them "characteristic, not of a mind flip-pantly stupid, but curiously acute," and that we laugh at her as we should at an acquaintance "who was exercising his ingenuity, instead of exposing his ignorance." This is all very true, but true it is also that Dogberry asked, "Who think you to be the most desertless man to be constable?" And again, "Is our whole dissembly appeared?" And "O

villain! thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this!" Sheridan has blundered in good company, at all events.

Not content with finding suggestions for Sheridan's work in various fictions, his earliest biographer, Dr. Watkins, suggests that the plot of the 'Rivals' was taken from life, having been suggested by his own courtship of Miss Linley and the ensuing duel with Captain Mathews. And a later biographer, Mrs. Oliphant, chose to identify Miss Lydia Languish with Mrs. Sheridan. Both suggestions are absurd. There is no warrant whatever for the assumption that any similarity existed between Miss Linley and Miss Languish; and the incidents of Sheridan's comedy do not at all coincide with the incidents of Sheridan's biography. Already, in his 'Maid of Bath,' had Foote set Miss Linley and one of her suitors on the stage; and surely Sheridan, who would not let his wife sing in public, would shrink from putting the story of their courtship into a comedy. It has been suggested, though, that in the duel scene Sheridan profited by his own experience on the field of honour; and also, that in the character of Faulkland he sketched his own state of mind during the long hours of waiting, when he was desperately in love, and saw little hope of marital happiness; in the days when he had utilized the devices of the stage, and for the sake of getting near to her for a few minutes, he had disguised himself as the coachman who drove her at night to her father's house. This may be true; but it is as dangerous as it is easy to apply the speeches of a dramatist, speaking in many a feigned voice, to the circumstances of his own life.

The 'Rivals,' as a play, has suffered the usual

vicissitudes of all old favourites. Although never long forgotten, it has been now and again neglected and now and again harshly treated. Of late years the parts of Faulkland and Julia have been much curtailed when the comedy has been acted in England; and in the admirable revival effected in 1880 by Mr. Joseph Jefferson in the United States, Julia was wholly omitted and Faulkland was suffered to remain only that he might serve as a foil to Bob Acres. It is pleasant to note that when the play was produced at the Haymarket Theatre in London by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, the parts of Julia and Faulkland were restored to their pristine importance. In the Haymarket revival of 1884, as in a highly successful revival at the Vaudeville Theatre (where in 1882-3 the comedy was acted more than two hundred times), the part of Mrs. Malaprop was performed by Mrs. Sterling, whose reading of the part, although more conscious and affected than Mrs. Drew's, was as effective as any author could desire. In the United States we were fortunate in the possession of Mr. John Gilbert, whose Sir Anthony Absolute may be matched with the great Sir Anthonys of the past. We may be sure that Mr. Gilbert's fine artistic conscience would forbid his repetition of a freak of Dowton's, who once, for a benefit, gave up Sir Anthony to appear as Mrs. Malaprop.

Nor was this the only occasion when a man played a woman's part in this comedy. In his autobiography, Kotzebue (from whom the author of the 'Rivals' was afterward to borrow 'Pizarro') records the performance of the English comedy in German in the cloister of the Minoret's Convent, a performance in which the future German dramatist, then a

mere youth, doubled the parts of Julia and Acres! In German as in French, there is more than one translation or adaptation of the 'Rivals'; and some of them are not without a comicality of their own. It is to be remembered, also, that on the celebrated visit of the English actors to Paris, in 1827, — a visit which had great influence on the development of French dramatic literature, and which may, indeed, be called the exciting cause of the Romantic movement, — the first play presented to the Parisian public by the English actors was the 'Rivals.'

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

A PREFACE to a play seems generally to be considered as a kind of closet-prologue, in which—if his piece has been successful—the author solicits that indulgence from the reader which he had before experienced from the audience ; but as the scope and immediate object of a play is to please a mixed assembly in *representation* (whose judgment in the theatre at least is decisive), its degree of reputation is usually as determined as public, before it can be prepared for the cooler tribunal of the study. Thus any further solicitude on the part of the writer becomes unnecessary at least, if not an intrusion ; and if the piece has been condemned in the performance, I fear an address to the closet, like an appeal to posterity, is constantly regarded as the procrastination of a suit, from a consciousness of the weakness of the cause. From these considerations, the following comedy would certainly have been submitted to the reader, without any further introduction than what it had in the representation, but that its success has probably been founded on a circumstance which the author is informed has not before attended a theatrical trial, and which consequently ought not to pass unnoticed.

I need scarcely add, that the circumstance alluded to was the withdrawing of the piece, to remove those

imperfections in the first representation which were too obvious to escape reprehension, and too numerous to admit of a hasty correction. There are few writers, I believe, who, even in the fullest consciousness of error, do not wish to palliate the faults which they acknowledge: and, however trifling the performance, to second their confession of its deficiencies, by whatever plea seems least disgraceful to their ability. In the present instance, it cannot be said to amount either to candour or modesty in me, to acknowledge an extreme inexperience and want of judgment on matters, in which, without guidance from practice, or spur from success, a young man should scarcely boast of being an adept. If it be said, that under such disadvantages no one should attempt to write a play, I must beg leave to dissent from the position, while the first point of experience that I have gained on the subject is, a knowledge of the candour and judgment with which an impartial public distinguishes between the errors of inexperience and incapacity, and the indulgence which it shows even to a disposition to remedy the defects of either.

It were unnecessary to enter into any further extenuation of what was thought exceptionable in this play, but that it has been said, that the managers should have prevented some of the defects before its appearance to the public—and in particular the uncommon length of the piece as represented the first night. It were an ill return for the most liberal and gentlemanly conduct on their side, to suffer any censure to rest where none was deserved. Hurry in writing has long been exploded as an excuse for an author; however, in the dramatic line, it may happen, that both an author and a manager may wish to

fill a chasm in the entertainment of the public with a hastiness not altogether culpable. The season was advanced when I first put the play into Mr. Harris's hands ; it was at that time at least double the length of any acting comedy. I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailing of it—till, I believe, his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness, and he left many excrescences remaining, because he had assisted in pruning so many more. Hence, though I was not uninformed that the acts were still too long, I flattered myself that, after the first trial, I might with safer judgment proceed to remove what should appear to have been most dissatisfactory. Many other errors there were, which might in part have arisen from my being by no means conversant with plays in general, either in reading or at the theatre. Yet I own that, in one respect, I did not regret my ignorance ; for as my first wish in attempting a play was to avoid every appearance of plagiarism, I thought I should stand a better chance of effecting this from being in a walk which I had not frequented, and where, consequently, the progress of invention was less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection : for on subjects on which the mind has been much informed, invention is slow of exerting itself. Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams ; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted.

With regard to some particular passages which on the first night's representation seemed generally disliked, I confess, that if I felt any emotion of surprise at the disapprobation, it was not that they were disapproved of, but that I had not before perceived that

they deserved it. As some part of the attack on the piece was begun too early to pass for the sentence of *judgment*, which is ever tardy in condemning, it has been suggested to me, that much of the disapprobation must have arisen from virulence of malice, rather than severity of criticism; but as I was more apprehensive of there being just grounds to excite the latter than conscious of having deserved the former, I continue not to believe that probable, which I am sure must have been unprovoked. However, if it was so, and I could even mark the quarter from whence it came, it would be ungenerous to retort; for no passion suffers more than malice from disappointment. For my own part, I see no reason why the author of a play should not regard a first night's audience as a candid and judicious friend attending, in behalf of the public, at his last rehearsal. If he can dispense with flattery, he is sure at least of sincerity, and even though the annotation be rude, he may rely upon the justness of the comment. Considered in this light, that audience, whose *fiat* is essential to the poet's claim, whether his object be fame or profit, has surely a right to expect some deference to its opinion, from principles of politeness at least, if not from gratitude.

As for the little puny critics, who scatter their peevish strictures in private circles, and scribble at every author who has the eminence of being unconnected with them, as they are usually spleen-sworn from a vain idea of increasing their consequence, there will always be found a petulance and illiberality in their remarks which should place them as far beneath the notice of a gentleman, as their original dulness had sunk them from the level of the most unsuccessful author.

It is not without pleasure that I catch at an opportunity of justifying myself from the charge of intending any national reflection in the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. If any gentlemen opposed the piece from that idea, I thank them sincerely for their opposition; and if the condemnation of this comedy (however misconceived the provocation), could have added one spark to the decaying flame of national attachment to the country supposed to be reflected on, I should have been happy in its fate; and might with truth have boasted, that it had done more real service in its failure than the successful morality of a thousand stage-novels will ever effect.

It is usual, I believe, to thank the performers in a new play, for the exertion of their several abilities. But where (as in this instance) their merit has been so striking and uncontroverted, as to call for the warmest and truest applause from a number of judicious audiences, the poet's after-praise comes like the feeble acclamation of a child to close the shouts of a multitude. The conduct, however, of the principals in a theatre cannot be so apparent to the public. I think it, therefore, but justice to declare that from this theatre (the only one I can speak of from experience) those writers who wish to try the dramatic line will meet with that candour and liberal attention which are generally allowed to be better calculated to lead genius into excellence, than either the precepts of judgment, or the guidance of experience.

THE AUTHOR.

THE RIVALS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ,

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE
IN 1775.

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE	<i>Mr. Shuter.</i>
CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE	<i>Mr. Woodward.</i>
FAULKLAND	<i>Mr. Lewis.</i>
ACRES	<i>Mr. Quick.</i>
SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER	<i>Mr. Lee.¹</i>
FAG	<i>Mr. Lee Lewes.</i>
DAVID	<i>Mr. Dunstal.</i>
THOMAS	<i>Mr. Fearon.</i>
MRS. MALAPROP	<i>Mrs. Green.</i>
LYDIA LANGUISH	<i>Miss Barsanti.</i>
JULIA	<i>Mrs. Bulkley.</i>
LUCY	<i>Mrs. Lessingham.</i>

Maid, Boy, Servants, etc.

SCENE — BATH.

Time of Action — Five Hours.

¹ Afterwards by *Mr. Clinch.*

PROLOGUE.

BY THE AUTHOR.

SPOKEN BY MR. WOODWARD AND MR. QUICK.

Enter SERJEANT-AT-LAW, *and* ATTORNEY *following*
and giving a paper.

Serj. WHAT 's here! — a vile cramp hand! I cannot see
Without my spectacles.

Att. He means his fee.
Nay, Mr. Serjeant, good sir, try again. [*Gives money.*]

Serj. The scrawl improves! [*more*] O come, 't is pretty plain.

Hey! how 's this? Dibble! — sure it cannot be!
A poet's brief! a poet and a fee!

Att. Yes, sir! though *you* without reward, I know,
Would gladly plead the Muse's cause.

Serj. So! — so!

Att. And if the fee offends, your wrath should fall
On me.

Serj. Dear Dibble, no offence at all.

Att. Some sons of Phœbus in the courts we meet,

Serj. And fifty sons of Phœbus in the Fleet!

Att. Nor pleads he worse, who with a decent sprig
Of bays adorns his legal waste of wig.

Serj. Full-bottom'd heroes thus, on signs, unfurl
 A leaf of laurel in a grove of curl!
 Yet tell your client that, in adverse days,
 This wig is warmer than a bush of bays.

Att. Do you, then, sir, my client's place supply,
 Profuse of robe and prodigal of tie —
 Do you, with all those blushing powers of face,
 And wonted bashful hesitating grace,
 Rise in the court, and flourish on the case. [*Exit.*

Serj. For practice then suppose — this brief will
 show it, —

Me, Serjeant Woodward, — counsel for the poet.
 Used to the ground, I know, 't is hard to deal
 With this dread *court*, from whence there's *no ap-
 peal*;

No *tricking* here, to blunt the edge of *law*,
 Or, damned in *equity*, escape by *flaw*:
 But *judgment* given, *your sentence* must remain;
 No *writ of error* lies — to *Drury-lane*!

Yet when so kind you seem, 't is past dispute
 We gain some favour, if not *costs of suit*.
 No spleen is here! I see no hoarded fury; —
 — I think I never faced a milder jury!

Sad else our plight! where frowns are transportation,
 A hiss the gallows, and a groan damnation!
 But such the public candour, without fear
 My client waives all *right of challenge* here.
 No newsman from *our session* is dismiss'd,
 Nor wit nor critic *we* scratch off the list;
 His faults can never hurt another's ease,
 His crime, at worst, a *bad attempt* to please:
 Thus, all respecting, he appeals to all,
 And by the general voice will *stand or fall*.

PROLOGUE.

BY THE AUTHOR.

SPOKEN ON THE TENTH NIGHT, BY MRS. BULKLEY.

GRANTED our cause, our suit and trial o'er,
The worthy Serjeant need appear no more :
In pleasing I a different client choose,
He served the Poet — I would serve the Muse:
Like him, I 'll try to merit your applause,
A female counsel in a female's cause.

Look on this form,¹ — where Humour, quaint and sly,
Dimples the cheek, and points the beaming eye ;
Where gay Invention seems to boast its wiles
In amorous hint, and half-triumphant smiles ;
While her light mask or covers Satire's strokes,
Or hides the conscious blush her wit provokes.

— Look on her well — does she seem form'd to
teach ?

Should you *expect* to hear this lady preach ?
Is gray experience suited to her youth ?
Do solemn sentiments become that mouth ?
Bid her be grave, those lips should rebel prove
To every theme that slanders mirth or love.

Yet, thus adorn'd with every graceful art
To charm the fancy and yet reach the heart —

¹ Pointing to the figure of Comedy.

Must we displace her? And instead advance
 The Goddess of the woful countenance —
 The sentimental Muse! — Her emblems view,
 The Pilgrim's Progress, and a sprig of rue!
 View her — too chaste to look like flesh and blood —
 Primly portrayed on emblematic wood!
 There, fix'd in usurpation, should she stand,
 She'll snatch the dagger from her sister's hand:
 And having made her votaries *weep a flood*,
 Good heaven! she'll end her comedies in blood —
 Bid Harry Woodward break poor Dunstal's crown;
 Imprison Quick, and knock Ned Shuter down;
 While sad Barsanti, weeping o'er the scene,
 Shall stab herself — or poison Mrs. Green. —

Such dire encroachments to prevent in time,
 Demands the critic's voice — the poet's rhyme.
 Can our light scenes add strength to holy laws?
 Such puny patronage but hurts the cause:
 Fair Virtue scorns our feeble aid to ask;
 And moral Truth disdains the trickster's mask.
 For here their fav'rite stands,¹ whose brow, severe
 And sad, claims Youth's respect, and Pity's tear;
 Who, when oppress'd by foes her worth creates,
 Can point a poniard at the Guilt she hates.

¹ Pointing to Tragedy.

*Scattered about
 the scene
 but*

THE RIVALS.

A COMEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Street in Bath.*

Enter THOMAS; he crosses the Stage; FAG follows, looking after him.

Fag. WHAT! Thomas!—Sure 't is he!—What! Thomas! Thomas!

Thos. Hey!—Odd's life! Mr. Fag!—give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

Fag. Excuse my glove, Thomas:—I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad. Why, my prince of chariot-eers, you look as hearty!—but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath?

Thos. Sure, master, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postillion, be all come.

Fag. Indeed!

Thos. Ay, master thought another fit of the gout was coming to make him a visit;—so he'd a mind to gi't the slip, and whip! we were all off at an hour's warning.

Fag. Ay, ay, hasty in everything, or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute!

Thos. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master? Odd! — Sir Anthony will stare to see the Captain here!

Fag. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.

Thos. Why sure!

Fag. At present I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

Thos. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

Fag. I have not changed, Thomas.

Thos. No! Why, did n't you say you had left young master?

Fag. No. — Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no farther: — briefly then — Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

Thos. The devil they are!

Fag. So it is indeed, Thomas; and the *ensign* half of my master being on guard at present — the *captain* has nothing to do with me.

Thos. So, so! — What, this is some freak, I warrant! — Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning o't — you know I ha' trusted you.

Fag. You'll be secret, Thomas?

Thos. As a coach-horse.

Fag. Why then the cause of all this is — LOVE. — Love, Thomas, who (as you may get read to you) has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter.

Thos. Ay, ay; — I guessed there was a lady in the case: — but pray, why does your master pass only for *ensign*? — Now if he had shammed *general* indeed —

Fag. Ah! Thomas, there lies the mystery o' the matter. Hark'ee, Thomas, my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste; a lady who likes him better as a *half-pay* *ensign* than if she knew he was son and heir to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a year.

Thos. That is an odd taste indeed! — But has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag? Is she rich, hey?

Fag. Rich! Why, I believe she owns half the stocks! Zounds! Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washerwoman! She has a lapdog that eats out of gold, — she feeds her parrot with small pearls, — and all her thread-papers are made of bank-notes!

Thos. Bravo, faith! — Odd! I warrant she has a set of thousands at least: but does she draw kindly with the captain?

Fag. As fond as pigeons.

Thos. May one hear her name?

Fag. Miss Lydia Languish. — But there is an old tough aunt in the way; — though, by the by, she has never seen my master — for we got acquainted with miss while on a visit in Gloucestershire.

Thos. Well — I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony. — But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath? — I ha' heard a deal of it — here 's a mort o' merry-making, hey?

Fag. Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well — 't is a good lounge; in the morning we go to the pump-room (though neither my master nor I drink the waters); after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards; at night we dance; but damn the place, I'm tired of it; their regular hours stupefy me — not a fiddle nor a card after eleven! — However, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties — I'll introduce you there, Thomas — you'll like him much.

Thos. Sure I know Mr. Du-Peigne — you know his master is to marry Madam Julia.

Fag. I had forgot. — But, Thomas, you must polish a little — indeed you must. — Here now — this wig!

* Compare Jason Brubler's attitude toward Bath in *How to Succeed in Love* (written 1820-1821)

— What the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas?
— None of the London whips of any degree of *ton* wear wigs now.

Thos. More 's the pity! more 's the pity, I say. — Odd's life! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 't would go next: — Odd rabbit it! when the fashion had got foot on the bar, I guessed 't would mount to the box! — but 't is all out of character, believe me, Mr. Fag: and look'ee, I 'll never gi' up mine — the lawyers and doctors may do as they will.

Fag. Well, Thomas, we 'll not quarrel about that.

Thos. Why, bless you, the gentlemen of they professions ben't all of a mind — for in our village now, thoff Jack Gauge, the exciseman has ta'en to his carrots, there's little Dick the farrier swears he 'll never forsake his bob, though all the college should appear with their own heads!

Fag. Indeed! well said, Dick! — But hold! — mark! — mark! Thomas.

Thos. Zooks! 't is the captain. — Is that the lady with him?

Fag. No, no, that is Madam Lucy, my master's mistress's maid. They lodge at that house — but I must after him to tell him the news.

Thos. Odd! he's giving her money! — Well, Mr. Fag —

Fag. Good-by, Thomas. I have an appointment in Gyde's Porch this evening at eight; meet me there, and we 'll make a little party.

[*Excunt severally.*]

SCENE II. — *A Dressing-room in MRS. MALAPROP'S Lodgings.*

LYDIA *sitting on a sofa, with a book in her hand.*
LUCY, *as just returned from a message.*

Lucy. Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it; I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

Lyd. And could not you get *The Reward of Constancy*?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lyd. Nor *The Fatal Connection*?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lyd. Nor *The Mistakes of the Heart*?

Lucy. Ma'am, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

Lyd. Heigh-ho! — Did you inquire for *The Delicate Distress*?

Lucy. Or, *The Memoirs of Lady Woodford*? Yes, indeed, ma'am. I asked everywhere for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-eared it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

Lyd. Heigh-ho! — Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing thumb; and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes. — Well, child, what have you brought me?

Lucy. Oh! here, ma'am. — [*Taking books from under her cloak, and from her pockets.*] This is *The Gordian Knot*, — and this *Peregrine Pickle*. Here are *The Tears of Sensibility* and *Humphrey Clinker*. This is *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*, written by her-

self, and here the second volume of *The Sentimental Journey*.

Lyd. Heigh-ho! — What are those books by the glass?

Lucy. The great one is only *The Whole Duty of Man*, where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

Lyd. Very well — give me the *sal volatile*.

Lucy. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

Lyd. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

Lucy. Oh, the drops; — here, ma'am.

Lyd. Hold! — here's some one coming — quick, see who it is. — [*Exit LUCY.*] Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice.

Reënter LUCY.

Lucy. Lud! ma'am, here is Miss Melville.

Lyd. Is it possible! — [*Exit LUCY.*]

Enter JULIA.

Lyd. My dearest Julia, how delighted am I! — [*Embrace.*] How unexpected was this happiness!

Jul. True, Lydia, and our pleasure is the greater. — But what has been the matter? — you were denied to me at first!

Lyd. Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you! — But first inform me what has conjured you to Bath? Is Sir Anthony here?

Jul. He is — we are arrived within this hour — and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dressed.

Lyd. Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my distress! — I know your gentle nature will sympathize with me, though your prudence may condemn me! My letters have informed you of my whole connection with Beverley!

but I have lost him, Julia! My aunt has discovered our intercourse by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since! Yet, would you believe it? she has absolutely fallen in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night since we have been here, at Lady Macshuffle's rout.

Jul. You jest, Lydia!

Lyd. No, upon my word. She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name though, till she chooses to be known to him;—but it is a Delia or a Celia, I assure you.

Jul. Then, surely, she is now more indulgent to her niece.

Lyd. Quite the contrary. Since she has discovered her own frailty, she is become more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another plague!—That odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day; so that I protest I shall be teased out of all spirits!

Jul. Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best.—Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

Lyd. But you have not heard the worst. Unfortunately I had quarrelled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since, to make it up.

Jul. What was his offence?

Lyd. Nothing at all!—But I don't know how it was, as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel, and, somehow, I was afraid he would never give me an opportunity. So, last Thursday, I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was at that time paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it *your friend unknown*, showed it to Beverley, charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I'd never see him more.

Jul. And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

Lyd. 'T was the next day my aunt found the matter out. I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I've lost him forever.

Jul. If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never give you up so. Yet consider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign, and you have thirty thousand pounds.

Lyd. But you know I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt's consent, till of age; and that is what I have determined to do, ever since I knew the penalty. Nor could I love the man, who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

Jul. Nay, this is caprice!

Lyd. What, does Julia tax me with caprice? — I thought her lover Faulkland had inured her to it.

Jul. I do not love even *his* faults.

Lyd. But apropos — you have sent to him, I suppose?

Jul. Not yet, upon my word — nor has he the least idea of my being in Bath. Sir Anthony's resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

Lyd. Well, Julia, you are your own mistress (though under the protection of Sir Anthony), yet have you, for this long year, been a slave to the caprice, the whim, the jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay assuming the right of a husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a lover.

Jul. Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my father's death. That, and some consequent embarrassments, have delayed what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He

is too generous to trifle on such a point:—and for his character, you wrong him there too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble, to be jealous; if he is captious, 't is without dissembling; if fretful, without rudeness. Unused to the fopperies of love, he is negligent of the little duties expected from a lover—but being unhackneyed in the passion, his affection is ardent and sincere; and as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought and emotion of his mistress to move in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him which would entitle him to it; and not feeling why he should be loved to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not loved enough. This temper, I must own, has cost me many unhappy hours; but I have learned to think myself his debtor for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment.

Lyd. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But tell me candidly, Julia, had he never saved your life, do you think you should have been attached to him as you are?—Believe me, the rude blast that overset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

Jul. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had preserved me; yet surely that alone were an obligation sufficient.

Lyd. Obligation! why a water-spaniel would have done as much!—Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim.

Jul. Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

Lyd. Nay, I do but jest.—What 's here?

Reënter LUCY in a hurry.

Lucy. O ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute just come home with your aunt.

Lyd. They 'll not come here. — Lucy, do you watch. [*Exit LUCY.*

Jul. Yet I must go. Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he 'll detain me, to show me the town. I 'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words so ingeniously *misapplied*, without being *mispronounced*.

Reënter LUCY.

Lucy. O Lud! ma'am, they are both coming upstairs.

Lyd. Well, I 'll not detain you, coz. — Adieu, my dear Julia, I 'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland. — There — through my room you 'll find another staircase.

Jul. Adieu! [*Embraces LYDIA, and exit.*

Lyd. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick. — Fling *Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet — throw *Roderick Random* into the closet — put *The Innocent Adultery* into *The Whole Duty of Man* — thrust *Lord Aimworth* under the sofa — cram *Ovid* behind the bolster — there — put the *Man of Feeling* into your pocket — so, so — now lay *Mrs. Chapone* in sight, and leave *Fordyce's Sermons* open on the table.

Lucy. Oh, burn it, ma'am! the hair-dresser has torn away as far as *Proper Pride*.

Lyd. Never mind — open at *Sobriety*. — Fling me *Lord Chesterfield's Letters*. — Now for 'em.

[*Exit LUCY.*

Enter MRS. MALAPROP *and* Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Mrs. Mal. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lyd. Madam, I thought you once ——

Mrs. Mal. You thought, miss! I don't know any business you have to think at all — thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow — to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory.

Lyd. Ah, madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

Mrs. Mal. But I say it is, miss; there is nothing on earth so easy as to *forget*, if a person chooses to set about it. I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle as if he had never existed — and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don't become a young woman.

Sir Anth. Why sure she won't pretend to remember what she's ordered not! — ay, this comes of her reading!

Lyd. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

Mrs. Mal. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it. — But tell me, Will you promise to do as you're bid? Will you take a husband of your friends' choosing?

Lyd. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. Mal. What business have you, miss, with

preference and aversion! They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 't is safest in matrimony to begin with a little *aversion*. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he 'd been a blackamoor — and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made! — and when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 't is unknown what tears I shed! — But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

Lyd. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

Mrs. Mal. Take yourself to your room. — You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humours.

Lyd. Willingly, ma'am. — I cannot change for the worse. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Mal. There 's a little intricate hussy for you!

Sir Anth. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am, — all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by Heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet!

Mrs. Mal. Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

Sir Anth. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library! — She had a book in each hand — they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers! — from that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. Mal. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir Anth. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year! — and depend on it,

Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last.

Mrs. Mal. Fy, fy, Sir Anthony! you surely speak laconically.

Sir. Anth. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know?

Mrs. Mal. Observe me, Sir Anthony, I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments.—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not misspell, and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sir Anth. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate—you say you have no objection to my proposal?

Mrs. Mal. None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

Sir Anth. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

Mrs. Mal. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

Sir Anth. Objection! — let him object if he dare! — No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple — in their younger days 't was "Jack, do this;" — if he demurred, I knocked him down — and if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, and the properest way, o' my conscience! — nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity. — Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations; — and I hope you will present *her* to the captain as an object not altogether illegible.

Sir Anth. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently. — Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl. — Take my advice — keep a tight hand: if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she 'd come about. [*Exit* SIR ANTH.]

Mrs. Mal. Well, at any rate I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition. She has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O'Trigger —

sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me! — No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it. — Lucy! — Lucy! — [*Calls.*] Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.

Reënter Lucy.

Lucy. Did you call, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Yes, girl. — Did you see Sir Lucius while you was out?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

Mrs. Mal. You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned —

Lucy. Oh Gemini! I 'd sooner cut my tongue out.

Mrs. Mal. Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on.

Lucy. No, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. So, come to me presently, and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius; but mind, Lucy, — if ever you betray what you are entrusted with (unless it be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my malevolence forever; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality.

[*Exit MRS. MAL.*

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha! — So, my dear Simplicity, let me give you a little respite. — [*Altering her manner.*] Let girls in my station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their trusts; commend me to a mask of silliness and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it! — Let me see to what account have I turned my simplicity lately. — [*Looks at a paper.*] For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign! — in money, sundry times, twelve pounds twelve; gowns, five; hats, ruffles, caps, &c. &c.,

numberless! — From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas and a half, — about a quarter's pay! — Item, from Mrs. Malaprop for betraying the young people to her — when I found matters were likely to be discovered — two guineas, and a black padusoy. — Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters — which I never delivered — two guineas, and a pair of buckles. — Item, from Sir. Lucius O' Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box! — Well done, Simplicity! — Yet I was forced to make my Hibernian believe that he was corresponding, not with the aunt, but with the niece: for though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortune. [Exit.

ACT II.

SCENE I. — CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE'S *Lodgings*.CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *and* FAG.

Fag. Sir, while I was there Sir Anthony came in : I told him, you had sent me to inquire after his health, and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

Abs. And what did he say, on hearing that I was at Bath ?

Fag. Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished ! He started back two or three paces, rapped out a dozen interjectural oaths, and asked what the devil had brought you here.

Abs. Well, sir, and what did you say ?

Fag. Oh, I lied, sir — I forget the precise lie ; but you may depend on 't, he got no truth from me. Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what *has* brought us to Bath ; in order that we may lie a little consistently. Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed.

Abs. You have said nothing to them — ?

Fag. Oh, not a word, sir, — not a word ! Mr. Thomas, indeed, the coachman (whom I take to be the discreetest of whips) —

Abs. 'Sdeath ! — you rascal ! you have not trusted him !

Fag. Oh, *no*, sir — no — no — not a syllable, upon my veracity ! — he was, indeed, a little inquisitive ;

but I was sly, sir — devilish sly! My master (said I), honest Thomas, (you know, sir, one says *honest* to one's inferiors,) is come to Bath to *recruit* — yes, sir, I said to *recruit* — and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor anyone else.

Abs. Well, *recruit* will do — let it be so.

Fag. Oh, sir, recruit will do surprisingly — indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas, that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard-markers.

Abs. You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

Fag. I beg pardon, sir — I beg pardon — but, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge indorsements as well as the bill.

Abs. Well, take care you don't hurt your credit, by offering too much security. — Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

Fag. He is above, sir, changing his dress.

Abs. Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

Fag. I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol. — I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down —

Abs. Go tell him I am here.

Fag. Yes, sir. — [*Going.*] I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favour to remember that we are *recruiting*, if you please.

Abs. Well, well.

Fag. And, in tenderness to my character, if your honour could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I

should esteem it as an obligation ; for though I never scruple to lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out. [Exit.

Abs. Now for my whimsical friend — if he does not know that his mistress is here, I 'll tease him a little before I tell him —

Enter FAULKLAND.

Faulkland, you 're welcome to Bath again ; you are punctual in your return.

Faulk. Yes ; I had nothing to detain me, when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you ? How stand matters between you and Lydia ?

Abs. Faith, much as they were ; I have not seen her since our quarrel ; however, I expect to be recalled every hour.

Faulk. Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once ?

Abs. What, and lose two-thirds of her fortune ? you forget that, my friend. — No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago.

Faulk. Nay then, you trifle too long — if you are sure of *her*, propose to the aunt in your own character, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

Abs. Softly, softly ; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet I am by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side : no, no ; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before I risk it. — Well, but Faulkland, you 'll dine with us to-day at the hotel ?

Faulk. Indeed I cannot; I am not in spirits to be of such a party.

Abs. By heavens! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover!—Do love like a man.

Faulk. I own I am unfit for company.

Abs. Am not *I* a lover; ay, and a romantic one, too? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain!

Faulk. Ah! Jack, your heart and soul are not, like mine, fixed immutably on one only object. You throw for a large stake, but losing, you could stake and throw again:—but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed were to be stripped of all.

Abs. But, for Heaven's sake! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present?

Faulk. What grounds for apprehension, did you say? Heavens! are there not a thousand! I fear for her spirits—her health—her life.—My absence may fret her; her anxiety for my return, her fears for me, may oppress her gentle temper: and for her health, does not every hour bring me cause to be alarmed? If it rains, some shower may even then have chilled her delicate frame! If the wind be keen, some rude blast may have affected her! The heat of noon, the dews of the evening, may endanger the life of her, for whom only I value mine. O Jack! when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension!

Abs. Ay, but we may choose whether we will take

the hint or not. — So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced that Julia were well and in spirits, you would be entirely content?

Faulk. I should be happy beyond measure — I am anxious only for that.

Abs. Then to cure your anxiety at once — Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

Faulk. Nay, Jack — don't trifle with me.

Abs. She is arrived here with my father within this hour.

Faulk. Can you be serious?

Abs. I thought you knew Sir Anthony better than to be surprised at a sudden whim of this kind. — Seriously, then, it is as I tell you — upon my honour.

Faulk. My dear friend! — Hollo, Du Peigne! my hat. — My dear Jack — now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness.

Reënter FAG.

Fag. Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

Abs. Stay, Faulkland, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her. — Fag, show the gentleman up. [*Exit FAG.*]

Faulk. What, is he much acquainted in the family?

Abs. Oh, very intimate: I insist on your not going: besides, his character will divert you.

Faulk. Well, I should like to ask him a few questions.

Abs. He is likewise a rival of mine — that is, of my *other self's*, for he does not think his friend Captain Absolute ever saw the lady in question; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to

me of *one Beverley*, a concealed skulking rival, who ——

Faulk. Hush ! — he 's here.

Enter ACRES.

Acres. Ha ! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how do'st thou ? just arrived, faith, as you see. — Sir, your humble servant. — Warm work on the roads, Jack ! — Odds whips and wheels ! I 've travelled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way as long as the Mall.

Abs. Ah ! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither. — Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you ; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

Acres. Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you : sir, I solicit your connections. — Hey, Jack — what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who ——

Abs. Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

Acres. Od'so ! she and your father can be but just arrived before me : — I suppose you have seen them. Ah ! Mr. Faulkland, you are indeed a happy man.

Faulk. I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir ; — I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire ?

Acres. Never knew her better in my life, sir, — never better. Odds blushes and blooms ! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

Faulk. Indeed ! — I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

Acres. False, false, sir — only said to vex you : quite the reverse, I assure you.

Faulk. There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me ; I had almost fretted myself ill.

Abs. Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick?

Faulk. No, no, you misunderstand me: yet surely a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love.—Now confess—is n't there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health?

Abs. Oh, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure!

Acres. Good apartments, Jack.

Faulk. Well, sir, but you were saying that Miss Melville has been so *exceedingly* well—what then, she has been merry and gay, I suppose?—Always in spirits—hey?

Acres. Merry, odds crickets! she has been the belle and spirit of the company wherever she has been—so lively and entertaining! so full of wit and humour!

Faulk. There, Jack, there.—Oh, by my soul! there is an innate levity in woman, that nothing can overcome.—What! happy, and I away!

Abs. Have done!—How foolish this is! just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress's spirits.

Faulk. Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

Abs. No indeed, you have not.

Faulk. Have I been lively and entertaining?

Abs. Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

Faulk. Have I been full of wit and humour?

Abs. No, faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid indeed.

Acres. What's the matter with the gentleman?

Abs. He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy—that's all—hey, Faulkland?

Faulk. Oh! I am rejoiced to hear it—yes, yes, she has a happy disposition!

Acres. That she has indeed—then she is so accomplished—so sweet a voice—so expert at her harpsichord—such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante!—There was this time month—Odds minims and crotchets! how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert!

Faulk. There again, what say you to this? you see she has been all mirth and song—not a thought of me!

Abs. Pho! man, is not music the food of love?

Faulk. Well, well, it may be so.—Pray, Mr. —, what's his damned name?—Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung?

Acres. Not I indeed.

Abs. Stay, now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-stream airs, I warrant; perhaps you may recollect;—did she sing, *When absent from my soul's delight?*

Acres. No, that wa'n't it.

Abs. Or, *Go, gentle gales!*—*Go, gentle gales!*

[Sings.

Acres. Oh, no! nothing like it. Odds! now I recollect one of them—*My heart's my own, my will is free.*

[Sings.

Faulk. Fool! fool that I am! to fix all my happiness on such a trifler! 'Sdeath! to make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle! to soothe her light heart with catches and glees!—What can you say to this, sir?

Abs. Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, *sir.*

Faulk. Nay, nay, nay—I'm not sorry that she has been happy—no, no, I am glad of that—I

would not have had her sad or sick — yet surely a sympathetic heart would have shown itself even in the choice of a song — she might have been temperately healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay ; — but she has been dancing too, I doubt not !

Acres. What does the gentleman say about dancing ?

Abs. He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

Acres. Ay, truly, does she — there was at our last race ball —

Faulk. Hell and the devil ! There ! there — I told you so ! I told you so ! Oh ! she thrives in my absence ! — Dancing ! but her whole feelings have been in opposition with mine ; — ~~I have~~ I have been anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary — my days have been hours of care, my nights of watchfulness. — She has been all health ! spirit ! laugh ! song ! dance ! — Oh ! damned, damned levity !

Abs. For Heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so ! — Suppose she has danced, what then ? — does not the ceremony of society often oblige —

Faulk. Well, well, I'll contain myself — perhaps as you say — for form sake. — What, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a *minuet* — hey ?

Acres. Oh, I dare insure her for that — but what I was going to speak of was her *country-dancing*. Odds swimings ! she has such an air with her !

Faulk. Now disappointment on her ! — Defend this, Absolute ; why don't you defend this ? — Country-dances ! jigs and reels ! am I to blame now ? A minuet I could have forgiven — I should not have minded that — I say I should not have regarded a minuet — but *country-dances* ! — Zounds ! had she

made one in a cotillion—I believe I could have forgiven even that—but to be monkey-led for a night!—to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies!—to show paces like a managed filly!—Oh, Jack, there never can be but one man in the world whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a *country-dance*; and, even then, the rest of the couples should be her great-uncles and aunts!

Abs. Ay, to be sure!—grandfathers and grandmothers!

Faulk. If there be but one vicious mind in the set 't will spread like a contagion—the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the jig—their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the very air—the atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain!—I must leave you—I own I am somewhat flurried—and that confounded looby has perceived it. [Going.

Abs. Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news.

Faulk. Damn his news! [Exit.

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! poor Faulkland, five minutes since—“nothing on earth could give him a moment's uneasiness!”

Acres. The gentleman wa'n't angry at my praising his mistress, was he?

Abs. A little jealous, I believe, Bob.

Acres. You don't say so? Ha, ha! jealous of me—that's a good joke.

Abs. There's nothing strange in that, Bob; let me tell you, that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the girls here.

Acres. Ah! you joke — ha! ha! mischief! — ha! ha! but you know I am not my own property, my dear Lydia has forestalled me. She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly — but odds frogs and tambours! I shan't take matters so here, now ancient madam has no voice in it: I'll make my old clothes know who's master. I shall straight-way cashier the hunting-frock, and render my leather breeches incapable. My hair has been in training some time.

Abs. Indeed!

Acres. Ay — and thoff the side curls are a little restive, my hind-part takes it very kindly.

Abs. Oh, you'll polish, I doubt not.

Acres. Absolutely I propose so — then if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, odds triggers and flints! I'll make him know the difference o't.

Abs. Spoke like a man! But pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing —

Acres. Ha! ha! you've taken notice of it — 't is genteel is n't it? — I did n't invent it myself though; but a commander in our militia, a great scholar, I assure you, says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable; — because, he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say, by Jove! or by Bacchus! or by Mars! or by Venus! or by Pallas! according to the sentiment: so that to swear with propriety, says my little major, the oath should be an echo to the sense; and this we call the *oath referential* or *sentimental swearing* — ha! ha! 't is genteel, is n't it?

Abs. Very genteel, and very new, indeed! — and

I dare say will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

Acres. Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete. — Damns have had their day.

Reënter FAG.

Fag. Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you. — Shall I show him into the parlour?

Abs. Ay — you may.

Acres. Well, I must be gone —

Abs. Stay; who is it, Fag?

Fag. Your father, sir.

Abs. You puppy, why did n't you show him up directly? [*Exit FAG.*

Acres. You have business with Sir Anthony. — I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop at my lodgings. I have sent also to my dear friend Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Adieu, Jack! we must meet at night, when you shall give me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia.

Abs. That I will with all my heart. — [*Exit ACRES.*] Now for a parental lecture — I hope he has heard nothing of the business that has brought me here — I wish the gout had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Sir, I am delighted to see you here: looking so well! your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

Sir Anth. Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack. — What, you are recruiting here, hey?

Abs. Yes, sir, I am on duty.

Sir Anth. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it, for I was going to write you on

a little matter of business. — Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

Abs. Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

Sir Anth. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty I may continue to plague you a long time. — Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit.

Abs. Sir, you are very good.

Sir Anth. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

Abs. Sir, your kindness overpowers me — such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection.

Sir Anth. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention — and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks.

Abs. Let my future life, sir, speak my gratitude; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence. — Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army?

Sir Anth. Oh, that shall be as your wife chooses.

Abs. My wife, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay, ay, settle that between you — settle that between you.

Abs. A wife, sir, did you say?

Sir Anth. Ay, a wife — why, did not I mention her before?

Abs. Not a word of her, sir.

Sir Anth. Odd so! — I must n't forget *her* though. — Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by marriage — the fortune is saddled with a wife — but I suppose that makes no difference.

Abs. Sir! sir! — you amaze me!

Sir Anth. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool? Just now you were all gratitude and duty.

Abs. I was, sir, — you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

Sir Anth. Why — what difference does that make? Odds life, sir! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live-stock on it, as it stands.

Abs. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase. — Pray, sir, who is the lady?

Sir Anth. What's that to you, sir? Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly.

Abs. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!

Sir Anth. I am sure, sir, 't is more unreasonable in you to *object* to a lady you know nothing of.

Abs. Then, sir, I must tell you plainly that my inclinations are fixed on another — my heart is engaged to an angel.

Sir Anth. Then pray let it send an excuse. It is very sorry — but *business* prevents its waiting on her.

Abs. But my vows are pledged to her.

Sir Anth. Let her foreclose, Jack; let her foreclose; they are not worth redeeming; besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose; so there can be no loss there.

Abs. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Hark'ee, Jack ; — I have heard you for some time with patience — I have been cool — quite cool ; but take care — you know I am compliance itself — when I am not thwarted ; — no one more easily led — when I have my own way ; — but don't put me in a frenzy.

Abs. Sir, I must repeat it — in this I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Now damn me ! if ever I call you Jack again while I live !

Abs. Nay, sir, but hear me.

Sir Anth. Sir, I won't hear a word — not a word ! not one word ! so give me your promise by a nod — and I'll tell you what, Jack — I mean, you dog — if you don't, by —

Abs. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness ! to —

Sir Anth. Zounds ! sirrah ! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose : she shall have a hump on each shoulder ! she shall be as crooked as the Crescent ; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum ; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew — she shall be all this, sirrah ! — yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty.

Abs. This is reason and moderation indeed !

Sir Anth. None of your sneering, puppy ! no grinning, jackanapes !

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my life.

Sir Anth. 'T is false, sir, I know you are laughing in your sleeve ; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah !

Abs. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

Sir Anth. None of your passion, sir ! none of your

violence, if you please! — It won't do with me, I promise you.

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

Sir Anth. 'T is a confounded lie! — I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog! but it won't do.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word —

Sir Anth. So you will fly out! can't you be cool like me? What the devil good can *passion* do? — *Passion* is of no service, you impudent, insolent, overbearing reprobate! — There, you sneer again! — don't provoke me! — but you rely upon the mildness of my temper — you do, you dog! you play upon the meekness of my disposition! — Yet take care — the patience of a saint may be overcome at last! — but mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why — confound you! I may in time forgive you. — If not, zounds! don't enter the same hemisphere with me! don't dare to breathe the same air or use the same light with me; but get an atmosphere and sun of your own! I'll strip you of your commission; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest. — I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you! and damn me! if ever I call you Jack again! [Exit Sir Anth.]

Abs. Mild, gentle, considerate father — I kiss your hands! — What a tender method of giving his opinion in these matters Sir Anthony has! I dare not trust him with the truth. — I wonder what old wealthy hag it is that he wants to bestow on me! — Yet he married himself for love! and was in his youth a bold intriguer, and a gay companion!

Reënter FAG.

Fag. Assuredly, sir, your father is wrath to a degree; he comes down-stairs eight or ten steps at a time — muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way: I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door — rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane; bids me carry that to my master; then kicking the poor turnspit into the area, damns us all, for a puppy triumvirate! — Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place, and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance.

Abs. Cease your impertinence, sir, at present. — Did you come in for nothing more? — Stand out of the way. [*Pushes him aside, and exit.*]

Fag. Soh! Sir Anthony trims my master: he is afraid to reply to his father — then vents his spleen on poor Fag! — When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice! Ah! it shows the worst temper — the basest —

Enter ERRAND BOY.

Boy. Mr. Fag! Mr. Fag! your master calls you.

Fag. Well, you little dirty puppy, you need not bawl so! — The meanest disposition! the ——

Boy. Quick, quick, Mr. Fag!

Fag. Quick! quick! you impudent jackanapes! am I to be commanded by you too? you little impertinent, insolent, kitchen-bred ——

[*Exit, kicking and beating him.*]

SCENE II. — *The North Parade.*

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. So — I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list — Captain Absolute. However, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received notice in form. Poor Acres is dismissed! — Well, I have done him a last friendly office, in letting him know that Beverley was here before him. — Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his *dear Dalia*, as he calls her: I wonder he's not here! — I have a little scruple of conscience from this deceit; though I should not be paid so well, if my hero knew that *Delia* was near fifty, and her own mistress.

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.

Sir Luc. Ha! my little ambassadress — upon my conscience, I have been looking for you; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

Lucy. [*Speaking simply.*] O Gemini! and I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.

Sir Luc. Faith! — may be that was the reason we did not meet; and it's very comical too, how you could go out and I not see you — for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee-house, and I chose the window on purpose that I might not miss you.

Lucy. My stars! Now I'd wager a sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

Sir Luc. Sure enough it must have been so — and I never dreamt it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my little girl, have you got nothing for me?

Lucy. Yes, but I have — I 've got a letter for you in my pocket.

Sir Luc. O faith! I guessed you were n't come empty-handed — well — let me see what the dear creature says.

Lucy. There, Sir Lucius. [*Gives him a letter.*]

Sir Luc. [*Reads.*] *Sir — there is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination: such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. — Very pretty, upon my word. — Female punctuation forbids me to say more, yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections.*

DELIA.

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language. Faith, she 's quite the queen of the dictionary! — for the devil a word dare refuse coming to her call — though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

Lucy. Ay, sir, a lady of her experience —

Sir Luc. Experience? what, at seventeen?

Lucy. O true, sir — but then she reads so — my stars! how she will read offhand!

Sir Luc. Faith, she must be very deep read to write this way — though she is rather an arbitrary writer too — for here are a great many poor words pressed into the service of this note that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom.

Lucy. Ah! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you!

Sir Luc. Oh, tell her I 'll make her the best husband in the word, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain! — But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent — and do everything fairly.

Lucy. Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice!

Sir Luc. Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it:—I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action.—If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure.—However, my pretty girl, [*Gives her money*] here's a little something to buy you a ribbon; and meet me in the evening, and I'll give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand to put you in mind. [*Kisses her.*]

Lucy. O Lud! Sir Lucius—I never seed such a gemman. My lady won't like you if you're so impudent.

Sir Luc. Faith she will, Lucy!—That same—pho! what's the name of it?—*modesty*—is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked; so, if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty—my dear.

Lucy. What, would you have me tell her a lie?

Sir Luc. Ah, then, you baggage! I'll make it a truth presently.

Lucy. For shame now! here is some one coming.

Sir Luc. Oh, faith, I'll quiet your conscience!

[*Sees FAG. — Exit, humming a tune.*]

Enter FAG.

Fag. So, so, ma'am! I humbly beg pardon.

Lucy. O Lud! now Mr. Fag—you flurry one so.

Fag. Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please.—You play false with us, madam.—I saw you give the baronet a letter.—My master shall know this—and if he don't call him out, I will.

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha! you gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty. — That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton. — She is taken with Sir Lucius's address.

Fag. How! what tastes some people have! — Why, I suppose I have walked by her window a hundred times. — But what says our young lady? any message to my master?

Lucy. Sad news, Mr. Fag. — A worse rival than Acres! Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son.

Fag. What, Captain Absolute?

Lucy. Even so — I overheard it all. .

Fag. Ha! ha! ha! very good, faith. . Good-by, Lucy, I must away with this news.

Lucy. Well, you may laugh — but it is true, I assure you. — [*Going.*] But, Mr. Fag, tell your master not to be cast down by this.

Fag. Oh, he'll be so disconsolate!

Lucy. And charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

Fag. Never fear! never fear!

Lucy. Be sure — bid him keep up his spirits.

Fag. We will — we will. [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *The North Parade.**Enter* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Abs. 'Tis just as Fag told me, indeed. Whimsical enough; faith! My father wants to force me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with! He must not know of my connection with her yet awhile. He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters. However, I'll read my recantation instantly. My conversion is something sudden, indeed — but I can assure him it is very sincere. So, so — here he comes. He looks plaguy gruff.
[*Steps aside.*]

Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Sir Anth. No — I'll die sooner than forgive him. Die, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him. At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper. An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy! Who can he take after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters! — for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since! But I have done with him; he's anybody's son for me. I never will see him more, never — never — never.

Abs. [*Aside, coming forward.*] Now for a penitential face.

Sir Anth. Fellow, get out of my way!

Abs. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

Sir Anth. I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

Abs. A sincere penitent. I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

Sir Anth. What's that?

Abs. I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me.

Sir Anth. Well, sir?

Abs. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty, and obedience, and authority.

Sir Anth. Well, puppy?

Abs. Why then, sir, the result of my reflections is — a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

Sir Anth. Why now you talk sense — absolute sense — I never heard anything more sensible in my life. Confound you! you shall be Jack again.

Abs. I am happy in the appellation.

Sir Anth. Why then Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is. Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture — prepare. What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

Abs. Languish! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

Sir Anth. Worcestershire! no. Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her niece, Miss Languish, who came into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment?

Abs. Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay — I think I do recollect something. Languish! Languish! She squints, don't she? A little red-haired girl?

Sir Anth. Squints! A red-haired girl! Zounds! no.

Abs. Then I must have forgot; it can't be the same person.

Sir Anth. Jack! Jack! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen?

Abs. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent. If I can please you in the matter, 't is all I desire.

Sir Anth. Nay, but Jack, such eyes! such eyes! so innocently wild! so bashfully irresolute! not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks! her cheeks, Jack! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! O Jack, lips smiling at their own discretion; and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting; more lovely in sullenness!

Abs. That's she indeed. Well done, old gentleman.

[*Aside.*

Sir Anth. Then, Jack, her neck! O Jack! Jack!

Abs. And which is to be mine, sir, the niece or the aunt?

Sir Anth. Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you! When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket! The aunt, indeed! Odds life! when I ran away with your mother, I would not have touched anything old or ugly to gain an empire.

Abs. Not to please your father, sir?

Sir Anth. To please my father! zounds! not to please — O, my father — odd so! — yes — yes; if

my father indeed had desired — that's quite another matter. Though he wa'n't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

Abs. I dare say not, sir.

Sir Anth. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful?

Abs. Sir, I repeat it — if I please you in this affair, 't is all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind — now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back: and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of two, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.

Sir Anth. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite! — a vile, insensible stock. You a soldier! — you're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on! Odds life! I have a great mind to marry the girl myself.

Abs. I am entirely at your disposal, sir: if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the aunt; or if you should change your mind and take the old lady — 't is the same to me — I'll marry the niece.

Sir Anth. Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great hypocrite, or — but come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie — I'm sure it must — come, now — damn your demure face! — come, confess, Jack — you have been lying — ha'n't you? You have been playing the hypocrite,

hey! — I 'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

Abs. I'm sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken.

Sir Anth. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me, I 'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you — come along, I 'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience — if you don't, egad, I will marry the girl myself! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. — JULIA'S *Dressing-room.*

FAULKLAND *discovered alone.*

Faulk. They told me Julia would return directly; I wonder she is not yet come! How mean does this captious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point; but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious! I am conscious of it — yet I cannot correct myself! What tender, honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met! how delicate was the warmth of her expressions! I was ashamed to appear less happy — though I had come resolved to wear a face of coolness and upbraiding. Sir Anthony's presence prevented my proposed expostulations: yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so very happy in my absence. She is coming! Yes! — I know the nimbleness of her tread, when she thinks her impatient Faulkland counts the moments of her stay.

Enter JULIA.

Jul. I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

Faulk. Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome — restrained as we were by the presence of a third person?

Jul. O Faulkland, when your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coldness in your first salutation.

Faulk. 'T was but your fancy, Julia. I was rejoiced to see you — to see you in such health. Sure I had no cause for coldness?

Jul. Nay, then, I see you have taken something ill. You must not conceal from me what it is.

Faulk. Well, then, shall I own to you that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbour Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire — on your mirth — your singing — dancing, and I know not what? For such is my temper, Julia, that I should regard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy. The mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers is a compact that no smile shall live there till they meet again.

Jul. Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing minute caprice? Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh in your breast against my tried affection?

Faulk. They have no weight with me, Julia: no, no — I am happy if you have been so — yet only say that you did not sing with mirth — say that you thought of Faulkland in the dance.

Jul. I never can be happy in your absence. If I wear a countenance of content, it is to show that my

mind holds no doubt of my Faulkland's truth. If I seemed sad, it were to make malice triumph; and say that I had fixed my heart on one who left me to lament his roving and my own credulity. Believe me, Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you when I say that I have often dressed sorrow in smiles, lest my friends should guess whose unkindness had caused my tears.

Faulk. You were ever all goodness to me. Oh, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy!

Jul. If ever without such cause from you, as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude.

Faulk. Ah! Julia, that last word is grating to me. I would I had no title to your gratitude! Search your heart, Julia; perhaps what you have mistaken for love is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart.

Jul. For what quality must I love you?

Faulk. For no quality! To regard me for any quality of mind or understanding were only to esteem me. And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be convinced that I owed no obligation there for any part of your affection.

Jul. Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention in the features of a man, he should laugh at it as misplaced. I have seen men, who in this vain article, perhaps, might rank above you; but my heart has never asked my eyes if it were so or not.

Faulk. Now this is not well from you, Julia—I despise person in a man—yet if you loved me as I wish, though I were an Æthiop, you'd think none so fair.

Jul. I see you are determined to be unkind! The contract which my poor father bound us in gives you more than a lover's privilege.

Faulk. Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed and justify my doubts. I would not have been more free — no — I am proud of my restraint. Yet — yet — perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn compact has fettered your inclinations, which else had made a worthier choice. How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought and promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love?

Jul. Then try me now. Let us be free as strangers as to what is past: my heart will not feel more liberty!

Faulk. There now! so hasty, Julia! so anxious to be free! If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not lose your hold even though I wished it!

Jul. Oh! you torture me to the heart! I cannot bear it!

Faulk. I do not mean to distress you. If I loved you less I should never give you an uneasy moment. But hear me. All my fretful doubts arise from this. Women are not used to weigh and separate the motives of their affections: the cold dictates of prudence, gratitude, or filial duty, may sometimes be mistaken for the pleadings of the heart. I would not boast — yet let me say that I have neither age, person, nor character, to found dislike on; my fortune such as few ladies could be charged with indiscretion in the match. O Julia! when love receives such countenance from prudence, nice minds will be suspicious of its birth.

Jul. I know not whither your insinuations would

tend:—but as they seem pressing to insult me, I will spare you the regret of having done so. I have given you no cause for this! [*Exit in tears.*]

Faulk. In tears! Stay, Julia: stay but for a moment.—The door is fastened!—Julia!—my soul!—but for one moment!—I hear her sobbing—'Sdeath!—what a brute am I to use her thus! Yet stay.—Ay—she is coming now:—how little resolution there is in woman!—how a few soft words can turn them!—No, faith!—she is not coming either.—Why, Julia—my love—say but that you forgive me—come but to tell me that—now this is being too resentful. Stay! she is coming too—I thought she would—no steadiness in anything: her going away must have been a mere trick then—she sha'n't see that I was hurt by it.—I'll affect indifference—[*Hums a tune: then listens.*] No—zounds! she's not coming!—nor don't intend it, I suppose.—This is not steadiness, but obstinacy! Yet I deserve it.—What, after so long an absence to quarrel with her tenderness!—'twas barbarous and unmanly!—I should be ashamed to see her now.—I'll wait till her just resentment is abated—and when I distress her so again, may I lose her forever! and be linked instead to some antique virago, whose gnawing passions and long-hoarded spleen shall make me curse my folly half the day and all the night. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—MRS. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*.

MRS. MALAPROP, *with a letter in her hand*, and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Mrs. Mal. Your being Sir Anthony's son, captain, would itself be a sufficient accommodation; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

Abs. Permit me to say, madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop, of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning, no tongue is silent.

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you do me infinite honour! I beg, captain, you 'll be seated.—[*They sit.*] Ah! few gentlemen, now-a-days, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman! few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman!—Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty!

Abs. It is but too true, indeed, ma'am;—yet I fear our ladies should share the blame—they think our admiration of beauty so great that knowledge in them would be superfluous. Thus, like garden-trees, they seldom show fruit till time has robbed them of the more specious blossom.—Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once!

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you overpower me with good-breeding.—He is the very pine-apple of politeness!—You are not ignorant, captain, that this giddy girl has somehow contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

Abs. Oh, I have heard the silly affair before. — I 'm not at all prejudiced against her on that account.

Mrs. Mal. You are very good and very considerate, captain. I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair; long ago I laid my positive conjunctions on her, never to think on the fellow again; — I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her; but, I am sorry to say she seems resolved to decline every particle that I enjoin her.

Abs. It must be very distressing, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree. — I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow; I believe I have it in my pocket.

Abs. Oh, the devil! my last note. *[Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. Ay, here it is.

Abs. Ay, my note indeed! O the little traitress Lucy. *[Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. There, perhaps you may know the writing. *[Gives him the letter.*

Abs. I think I have seen the hand before — yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before —

Mrs. Mal. Nay, but read it, captain.

Abs. *[Reads.]* *My soul's idol, my adored Lydia!*
— Very tender indeed!

Mrs. Mal. Tender! ay, and profane too, o' my conscience.

Abs. *[Reads.]* *I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival —*

Mrs. Mal. That 's you, sir.

Abs. *[Reads.]* *Has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman and a man of honour.*
— Well, that 's handsome enough.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, the fellow has some design in writing so.

Abs. That he had, I 'll answer for him, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. But go on, sir — you 'll see presently.

Abs. [Reads.] *As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you —* Who can he mean by that?

Mrs. Mal. Me, sir — me! — he means me! — There — what do you think now? — but go on a little further.

Abs. Impudent scoundrel! — [Reads.] *it shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity which makes her dress up her coarse features and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don't understand —*

Mrs. Mal. There, sir, an attack upon my language! What do you think of that? — an aspersion upon my parts of speech! was ever such a brute! Sure, if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!

Abs. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! let me see — [Reads.] *same ridiculous vanity —*

Mrs. Mal. You need not read it again, sir.

Abs. I beg pardon, ma'am. — [Reads.] *does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration — an impudent coxcomb — so that I have a scheme to see you shortly with the old harri-
dan's consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interview. —* Was ever such assurance!

Mrs. Mal. Did you ever hear anything like it? — he 'll elude my vigilance, will he — yes, yes! ha! ha! he 's very likely to enter these doors; — we 'll try who can plot best!

Abs. So we will, ma'am — so we will! Ha! ha!

ha! a conceited puppy, ha! ha! ha! — Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time — let her even plot an elopement with him — then do you connive at her escape — while I, just in the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

Mrs. Mal. I am delighted with the scheme; never was anything better perpetrated!

Abs. But, pray, could not I see the lady for a few minutes now? — I should like to try her temper a little.

Mrs. Mal. Why, I don't know — I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind. There is a decorum in these matters.

Abs. O Lord! she won't mind me — only tell her Beverley —

Mrs. Mal. Sir.

Abs. Gently, good tongue. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. What did you say of Beverley?

Abs. Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below; she'd come down fast enough then — ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Mal. 'T would be a trick she well deserves; besides, you know the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her — ha! ha! Let him if he can, I say again. Lydia, come down here! — [*Calling.*] He'll make me a go-between in their interviews! ha! ha! ha! Come down, I say, Lydia! I don't wonder at your laughing, ha! ha! ha! his impudence is truly ridiculous.

Abs. 'T is very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Mal. The little hussy won't hear. Well, I'll

go and tell her at once who it is — she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her. And I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

Abs. As you please, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. For the present, captain, your servant. Ah! you've not done laughing yet, I see — elude my vigilance; yes, yes; ha! ha! ha! [*Exit.*

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! one would think now that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security; but such is Lydia's caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her. I'll see whether she knows me.

[*Walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures.*

Enter LYDIA.

Lyd. What a scene am I now to go through! surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart. I have heard of girls persecuted as I am who have appealed in behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival; suppose I were to try it — there stands the hated rival — an officer too! — but oh, how unlike my Beverley! I wonder he don't begin — truly he seems a very negligent wooer! — quite at his ease, upon my word! — I'll speak first — Mr. Absolute.

Abs. Ma'am. [*Turns round.*

Lyd. O heavens! Beverley!

Abs. Hush! — hush, my life! softly! be not surprised!

Lyd. I am so astonished! and so terrified! and so overjoyed! for Heaven's sake! how came you here?

Abs. Briefly, I have deceived your aunt — I was

informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and, contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on her for Captain Absolute.

Lyd. O charming! And she really takes you for young Absolute?

Abs. Oh, she's convinced of it.

Lyd. Ha! ha! ha! I can't forbear laughing to think how her sagacity is overreached!

Abs. But we trifle with our precious moments — such another opportunity may not occur; then let me now conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserving persecution, and with a licensed warmth plead for my reward.

Lyd. Will you, then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth? that burden on the wings of love?

Abs. Oh, come to me — rich only thus — in loveliness! Bring no portion to me but thy love — 't will be generous in you, Lydia — for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay.

Lyd. How persuasive are his words! — how charming will poverty be with him! [*Aside.*

Abs. Ah! my soul, what a life will we then live! love shall be our idol and support! we will worship him with a monastic strictness; abjuring all worldly toys, to centre every thought and action there. Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth; while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love show doubly bright. By Heavens! I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say, the world affords no smile to me but here — [*Embracing her.*] If she holds out now, the devil is in it! [*Aside.*

Lyd. Now could I fly with him to the antipodes !
but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis.

[*Aside.*

Reënter MRS. MALAPROP, *listening.*

Mrs. Mal. I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself. [*Aside.*

Abs. So pensive, Lydia ! — is then your warmth abated ?

Mrs. Mal. Warmth abated ! — so ! — she has been in a passion, I suppose. [*Aside.*

Lyd. No — nor ever can while I have life.

Mrs. Mal. An ill-tempered little devil ! she 'll be in a passion all her life — will she ? [*Aside.*

Lyd. Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

Mrs. Mal. Very dutiful, upon my word ! [*Aside.*

Lyd. Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

Mrs. Mal. I am astonished at her assurance ! — to his face — this is to his face ! [*Aside.*

Abs. Thus then let me enforce my suit. [*Kneeling.*

Mrs. Mal. [*Aside.*] Ay, poor young man ! — down on his knees entreating for pity ! — I can contain no longer. — [*Coming forward.*] Why, thou vixen ! I have overheard you.

Abs. Oh, confound her vigilance ! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologize for her shocking rudeness.

Abs. [*Aside.*] So — all 's safe, I find. — [*Aloud.*] I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady —

Mrs. Mal. Oh, there 's nothing to be hoped for from her ! she 's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile.

Lyd. Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now?

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou unblushing rebel — did n't you tell this gentleman to his face that you loved another better? — did n't you say you never would be his?

Lyd. No, madam — I did not.

Mrs. Mal. Good heavens! what assurance! — Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman! — Did n't you boast that Beverley, that stroller Beverley, possessed your heart? — Tell me that, I say.

Lyd. 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley —

Mrs. Mal. Hold! hold, Assurance! — you shall not be so rude.

Abs. Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech: — she's very welcome to talk thus — it does not hurt *me* in the least, I assure you.

Mrs. Mal. You are *too* good, captain — *too* amiably patient — but come with me, miss. — Let us see you again soon, captain — remember what we have fixed.

Abs. I shall, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

Lyd. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bev —

Mrs. Mal. Hussy! I'll choke the word in your throat! — come along — come along.

[*Exeunt severally, CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE kissing his hand to LYDIA — MRS. MALAPROP stopping her from speaking.*]

SCENE IV. — ACRES'S *Lodgings*.

ACRES, *as just dressed*, and DAVID.

Acres. Indeed, David — do you think I become it so?

Dav. You are quite another creature, believe me, master, by the mass! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon monkerony in all the print-shops in Bath!

Acres. Dress *does* make a difference, David.

Dav. 'Tis all in all, I think. — Difference! why, an' you were to go now to Clod-Hall, I am certain the old lady wouldn't know you: Master Butler would n't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, 'Lard presarve me!' our dairy-maid would come giggling to the door, and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat. — Oons! I'll hold a gallon, there a'nt a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail!

Acres. Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

Dav. So I says of your honour's boots; but the boy never heeds me!

Acres. But, David, has Mr. De-la-grace been here? I must rub up my balancing, and chasing, and boring.

Dav. I'll call again, sir.

Acres. Do — and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.

Dav. I will. — By the mass, I can't help looking at your head! — if I had n't been by at the cooking, I wish I may die if I should have known the dish again myself!

[*Exit.*

Acres. [*Comes forward, practising a dancing step.*] Sink, slide — coupee. — Confound the first inventors of cotillons! say I — they are as bad as algebra to us country gentlemen — I can walk a minuet easy enough when I am forced! — and I have been accounted a good stick in a country dance. — Odds jigs and tabors! I never valued your cross-over to couple — figure in — right and left — and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the country! — but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillons are quite beyond me! — I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure — mine are true-born English legs — they don't understand their curst French lingo! — their *pas* this, and *pas* that, and *pas* t'other! — damn me! my feet don't like to be called paws! no 't is certain I have most Antigallican toes!

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait on you, sir.

Acres. Show him in!

[*Exit SERVANT.*]

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.

Sir Luc. Mr. Acres, I am delighted to embrace you.

Acres. My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

Sir Luc. Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath?

Acres. Faith! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last. — In short, I have been very ill used, Sir Lucius. — I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as on a very ill-used gentleman.

Sir Luc. Pray what is the case? — I ask no names.

Acres. Mark me, Sir Lucius, I fall as deep as

need be in love with a young lady—her friends take my part—I follow her to Bath—send word of my arrival; and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of.—This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill used.

Sir Luc. Very ill, upon my conscience.—Pray, can you divine the cause of it?

Acres. Why, there 's the matter; she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath.—Odds slanders and lies! he must be at the bottom of it.

Sir Luc. A rival in the case, is there?—and you think he has supplanted you unfairly?

Acres. Unfairly! to be sure he has. He never could have done it fairly.

Sir Luc. Then sure you know what is to be done!

Acres. Not I, upon my soul!

Sir Luc. We wear no swords here, but you understand me.

Acres. What! fight him!

Sir Luc. Ay, to be sure: what can I mean else?

Acres. But he has given me no provocation.

Sir Luc. Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world. Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman? Oh, by my soul! it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

Acres. Breach of friendship! Ay, ay; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

Sir Luc. That 's no argument at all—he has the less right then to take such a liberty.

Acres. Gad, that 's true—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius! I fire apace! Odds hilts and blades! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and

not know it! But could n't I contrive to have a little right of my side?

Sir Luc. What the devil signifies *right*, when your *honour* is concerned? Do you think Achilles or my little Alexander the Great ever inquired where the right lay? No, by my soul, they drew their broadswords, and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

Acres. Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart; I believe courage must be catching! I certainly do feel a kind of valour rising as it were — a kind of courage, as I may say. — Odds flints, pans, and triggers! I'll challenge him directly.

Sir Luc. Ah, my little friend! if I had Blunderbuss-Hall here, I could show you a range of ancestry, in the O'Trigger line, that would furnish the new room; every one of whom had killed his man! — For though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipped through my fingers, I thank heaven our honour and the family pictures are as fresh as ever.

Acres. O, Sir Lucius! I have had ancestors too! — every man of 'em colonel or captain in the militia! — Odds balls and barrels! — say no more — I'm braced for it. The thunder of your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast; — Zounds! as the man in the play says, '*I could do such deeds!*' —

Sir Luc. Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case — these things should always be done civilly.

Acres. I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius — I must be in a rage. — Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me. Come, here's pen and paper. — [*Sits down to write.*] I would the ink were red! — Indite, I say indite! — How shall I begin? Odds

bullets and blades! I'll write a good bold hand, however.

Sir Luc. Pray compose yourself.

Acres. Come — now, shall I begin with an oath? Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme.

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now — *Sir* —

Acres. That's too civil by half.

Sir Luc. To prevent the confusion that might arise —

Acres. Well —

Sir Luc. From our both addressing the same lady —

Acres. Ay, there's the reason — same lady — well —

Sir Luc. I shall expect the honour of your company —

Acres. Zounds! I'm not asking him to dinner.

Sir Luc. Pray be easy.

Acres. Well then, honour of your company —

Sir Luc. To settle our pretensions —

Acres. Well.

Sir Luc. Let me see, ay, King's-Mead-Field will do — *in King's-Mead-Fields.*

Acres. So, that's done — Well, I'll fold it up presently; my own crest — a hand and dagger shall be the seal.

Sir Luc. You see now this little explanation will put a stop at once to all confusion or misunderstanding that might arise between you.

Acres. Ay, we fight to prevent any misunderstanding.

Sir Luc. Now, I'll leave you to fix your own time. — Take my advice, and you'll decide it this evening

if you can ; then let the worst come of it, 't will be off your mind to-morrow.

Acres. Very true.

Sir Luc. So I shall see nothing more of you, unless it be by letter, till the evening. — I would do myself the honour to carry your message ; but, to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here, who put a jest on me lately at the expense of my country, and I only want to fall in with the gentleman to call him out.

Acres. By my valour, I should like to see you fight first ! Odds life ! I should like to see you kill him if it was only to get a little lesson.

Sir Luc. I shall be very proud of instructing you. — Well for the present — but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do everything in a mild and agreeable manner. — Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished, as your sword.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — ACRES'S *Lodgings*.

ACRES and DAVID.

Dav. Then, by the mass, sir! I would do no such thing — ne'er a Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wa'n't so minded. Oons! what will the old lady say, when she hears o't?

Acres. Ah! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius! — Odds sparks and flames! he would have roused your valour.

Dav. Not he, indeed. I hates such bloodthirsty cormorants. Look'ee, master, if you 'd wanted a bout at boxing, quarter-staff, or short-staff, I should never be the man to bid you cry off: but for your curst sharps and snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em.

Acres. But my honour, David, my honour! I must be very careful of my honour.

Dav. Ay, by the mass! and I would be very careful of it; and I think in return my *honour* could n't do less than to be very careful of *me*.

Acres. Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour!

Dav. I say then, it would be but civil in *honour* never to risk the loss of a *gentleman*. — Look'ee, master, this *honour* seems to me to be a marvellous false friend: ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant. —

Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank God, no one can say of me) ; well — my honour makes me quarrel with another gentleman of my acquaintance. — So — we fight. (Pleasant enough that!) Boh! — I kill him — (the more 's my luck.) Now, pray who gets the profit of it? — Why, my *honour*. But put the case that he kills me! — by the mass! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

Acres. No, David — in that case! — Odds crowns and laurels! your honour follows you to the grave.

Dav. Now that 's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

Acres. Zounds! David, you are a coward! — It does n't become my valour to listen to you. — What, shall I disgrace my ancestors? — Think of that, David — think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors!

Dav. Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look'ee now, master, to go to them in such haste — with an ounce of lead in your brains — I should think might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with.

Acres. But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very, *very* great danger, hey? — Odds life! people often fight without any mischief done!

Dav. By the mass, I think 't is ten to one against you! — Oons! here to meet some lion-headed fellow, I warrant, with his damned double-barrelled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols! — Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to think o't! — Those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons! Well, I never could abide

'em — from a child I never could fancy 'em! — I suppose there a'n't been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol!

Acres. Zounds! I *won't* be afraid! — Odds fire and fury! you shan't make me afraid. — Here is the challenge, and I have sent for my dear friend Jack Absolute to carry it for me.

Dav. Ay, i' the name of mischief, let *him* be the messenger. — For my part, I would n't lend a hand to it for the best horse in your stable. By the mass! it don't look like another letter! It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter; — and I warrant smells of gunpowder like a soldier's pouch! — Oons! I would n't swear it may n't go off!

Acres. Out, you poltroon! you ha'n't the valour of a grasshopper.

Dav. Well, I say no more — 't will be sad news, to be sure, at Clod-Hall! but I ha' done. — How Phillis will howl when she hears of it! — Ay, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's going after! — And I warrant old Crop, who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years, will curse the hour he was born. [*Whimpering.*

Acres. It won't do, David — I am determined to fight — so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Captain Absolute, sir.

Acres. Oh! show him up. [*Exit SERVANT.*

Dav. Well, Heaven send we be all alive this time to-morrow.

Acres. What's that? — Don't provoke me, David!

Dav. Good-by, master. [*Whimpering.*

Acres. Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven !
[*Exit* DAVID.]

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Abs. What 's the matter, Bob ?

Acres. A vile, sheep-hearted blockhead ! — If I had n't the valour of St. George and the dragon to boot —

Abs. But what did you want with me, Bob ?

Acres. Oh ! — there —

[*Gives him the challenge.*]

Abs. [*Aside.*] *To Ensign Beverley.* — So, what 's going on now ? — [*Aloud.*] Well, what 's this ?

Acres. A challenge !

Abs. Indeed ! Why, you won't fight him ; will you, Bob ?

Acres. Egad, but I will, Jack. Sir Lucius has wrought me to it. He has left me full of rage — and I 'll fight this evening, that so much good passion may n't be wasted.

Abs. But what have I to do with this ?

Acres. Why, as I think you know something of this fellow, I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal defiance.

Abs. Well, give it to me, and trust me he gets it.

Acres. Thank you, my dear friend, my dear Jack ; but it is giving you a great deal of trouble.

Abs. Not in the least — I beg you won't mention it. — No trouble in the world, I assure you.

Acres. You are very kind. — What it is to have a friend ! — You could n't be my second, could you, Jack ?

Abs. Why no, Bob — not in *this* affair — it would not be quite so proper.

Acres. Well, then, I must get my friend Sir Lucius. I shall have your good wishes, however, Jack?

Abs. Whenever he meets you, believe me.

Reënter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir Anthony Absolute is below, inquiring for the captain.

Abs. I'll come instantly. — [*Exit SERVANT.*]
Well, my little hero, success attend you. [*Going.*

Acres. Stay — stay, Jack. — If Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow — will you, Jack?

Abs. To be sure I shall. I'll say you are a determined dog — hey, Bob!

Acres. Ay, do, do — and if that frightens him, egad, perhaps he may n't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a week; will you, Jack?

Abs. I will, I will; I'll say you are called in the country *Fighting Bob*.

Acres. Right — right — 't is all to prevent mischief; for I don't want to take his life if I clear my honour.

Abs. No! — that's very kind of you.

Acres. Why, you don't wish me to kill him — do you, Jack?

Abs. No, upon my soul, I do not. — But a devil of a fellow, hey? [*Going.*

Acres. True, true — but stay — stay, Jack — you may add that you never saw me in such a rage before — a most devouring rage!

Abs. I will, I will.

Acres. Remember, Jack — a determined dog!

Abs. Ay, ay, *Fighting Bob*! [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II. — MRS. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*.MRS. MALAPROP *and* LYDIA.

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou perverse one! — tell me what you can object to him? Is n't he a handsome man? — tell me that. A genteel man? a pretty figure of a man?

Lyd. [*Aside.*] She little thinks whom she is praising! — [*Aloud.*] So is Beverley, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. No caparisons, miss, if you please. Caparisons don't become a young woman. No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman!

Lyd. Ay, the Captain Absolute *you* have seen.

[*Aside.*
Mrs. Mal. Then he's so well bred; — *so* full of alacrity, and adulation! — and has *so much* to say for himself: — in such good language too! — His physiognomy so grammatical! — Then his presence is so noble! — I protest, when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play: — "Hesperian curls — the front of Job himself! — An eye, like March, to threaten at command! — A station, like Harry Mercury, new —" Something about kissing — on a hill — however, the similitude struck me directly.

Lyd. How enraged she'll be presently, when she discovers her mistake!

[*Aside.*

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Show them up here. — [*Exit* SERVANT.] Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as

becomes a young woman. Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

Lyd. Madam, I have told you my resolution! — I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to or look at him.

[Flings herself into a chair, with her face from the door.]

Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Sir Anth. Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop; come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty, — and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow. — I don't know what's the matter; but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip.

Mrs. Mal. You have infinite trouble, Sir Anthony, in the affair. I am ashamed for the cause! — *[Aside to LYDIA.]* Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you! — pay your respects!

Sir Anth. I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard due to her aunt's choice and *my* alliance. — *[Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]* Now, Jack, speak to her.

Abs. [Aside.] What the devil shall I do! — *[Aside to SIR ANTHONY.]* You see, sir, she won't even look at me whilst you are here. — I knew she wouldn't! — I told you so. — Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together!

[Seems to expostulate with his father.]

Lyd. [Aside.] I wonder I ha' n't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him! — perhaps their regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

Sir Anth. I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet!

Mrs. Mal. I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small. — [*Aside to LYDIA.*] Turn round, Lydia : I blush for you !

Sir Anth. May I not flatter myself that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son ! — [*Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.*] Why don't you begin, Jack ? — Speak, you puppy — speak.

Mrs. Mal. It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any. She will not say she has. — [*Aside to LYDIA.*] Answer, hussy ! why don't you answer ?

Sir Anth. Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness. — [*Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.*] — Zounds ! sirrah ! why don't you speak !

Lyd. [*Aside.*] I think my lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself. — How strangely blind my aunt must be !

Abs. Hem ! hem ! madam — hem ! — [*Attempts to speak, then returns to SIR ANTHONY.*] Faith ! sir, I am so confounded ! — and — so — so — confused ! — I told you I should be so, sir — I knew it. — The — the — tremor of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

Sir Anth. But it don't take away your voice, fool, does it ? — Go up, and speak to her directly !

[CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *makes signs to* MRS. MALAPROP *to leave them together.*

Mrs. Mal. Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together ? — [*Aside to LYDIA.*] Ah ! you stubborn little vixen !

Sir Anth. Not yet, ma'am, not yet ! — [*Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.*] What the devil are you at ? unlock your jaws, sirrah, or —

Abs. [*Aside.*] Now Heaven send she may be too

sullen to look round! — I must disguise my voice. —
[Draws near LYDIA, and speaks in a low hoarse tone.]
 Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love? Will not —

Sir Anth. What the devil ails the fellow? Why don't you speak out? — not stand croaking like a frog in a quinsy!

Abs. The — the — excess of my awe, and my — my — my modesty, quite choke me!

Sir Anth. Ah! your *modesty* again! — I'll tell you what, Jack; if you don't speak out directly, and glibly too, I shall be in such a rage! — Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front.

[MRS. MALAPROP seems to chide LYDIA.]

Abs. [Aside.] So all will out, I see! — *[Goes up to LYDIA, speaks softly.]* Be not surprised, my Lydia, suppress all surprise at present.

Lyd. [Aside.] Heavens! 't is Beverley's voice! Sure he can't have imposed on Sir Anthony too! — *[Looks round by degrees, then starts up.]* Is this possible! — my Beverley! — how can this be? — my Beverley?

Abs. Ah! 't is all over. *[Aside.]*

Sir Anth. Beverley! — the devil — Beverley! — What can the girl mean? — This is my son, Jack Absolute.

Mrs. Mal. For shame, hussy! for shame! your head runs so on that fellow, that you have him always in your eyes! — beg Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

Lyd. I see no Captain Absolute, but my loved Beverley!

Sir Anth. Zounds! the girl's mad! — her brain's turned by reading.

Mrs. Mal. O' my conscience, I believe so! — What do you mean by Beverley, hussy? — You saw Captain Absolute before to-day; there he is — your husband that shall be.

Lyd. With all my soul, ma'am — when I refuse my Beverley —

Sir Anth. Oh! she's as mad as Bedlam! — or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick! — Come here, sirrah, who the devil are you?

Abs. Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself; but I'll endeavour to recollect.

Sir Anth. Are you my son or not? — answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, who are you? Oh, mercy! I begin to suspect! —

Abs. [*Aside.*] Ye powers of Impudence, befriend me! — [*Aloud.*] Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son; and that I sincerely believe myself to be yours also, I hope my duty has always shown. — Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer, and shall be proud to add affectionate nephew. — I need not tell my Lydia that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name and station, which has proved a test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated character.

Lyd. So! — there will be no elopement after all! [*Sullenly.*]

Sir Anth. Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow! to do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance!

Abs. Oh, you flatter me, sir — you compliment — 't is my *modesty*, you know, sir — my *modesty*, that has stood in my way.

Sir Anth. Well, I am glad you are not the dull, insensible varlet you pretended to be, however! — I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog — I am. — So this was your *penitence*, your *duty* and *obedience*! — I thought it was damned sudden! —

You never heard their names before, not you! — *what the LANGUISHES of Worcestershire*, hey? — *if you could please me in the affair it was all you desired*! —

Ah! you dissembling villain! — What! — [*Pointing to LYDIA.*] *she squints, don't she?* — *a little red-haired girl*! — hey? — Why, you hypocritical young rascal! — I wonder you an't ashamed to hold up your head!

Abs. 'T is with difficulty, sir. — I *am* confused — very much confused, as you must perceive.

Mrs. Mal. O Lud! Sir Anthony! — a new light breaks in upon me! — hey! — how! what! captain, did *you* write the letters then? — What — am I to thank *you* for the elegant compilation of *an old weather-beaten she-dragon* — hey! — Oh, mercy! — was it *you* that reflected on my parts of speech?

Abs. Dear sir! my modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me — I shall certainly not be able to stand it!

Sir Anth. Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive; — odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured! and so gallant! hey! Mrs. Malaprop!

Mrs. Mal. Well, Sir Anthony, since *you* desire it, we will not anticipate the past! — so mind, young people — our retrospection will be all to the future.

Sir Anth. Come, we must leave them together; Mrs. Malaprop, they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant! — Jack — is n't the cheek as I said, hey? — and the eye, you rogue! — and the lip

—hey? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness—theirs is the time of life for happiness!—*Youth's the season made for joy*—[*Sings.*] —hey!—Odds life! I'm in such spirits,—I don't know what I could not do!—Permit me, ma'am—[*Gives his hand to MRS. MALAPROP.*] [*Sings.*] Tol-de-rol—'gad, I should like to have a little fooling myself—Tol-de-rol! de-rol.

[*Exit, singing and handing MRS. MALAPROP.*—
LYDIA sits sullenly in her chair.

Abs. [*Aside.*] So much thought bodes me no good.—[*Aloud.*] So grave, Lydia!

Lyd. Sir!

Abs. [*Aside.*] So!—egad! I thought as much!—that damned monosyllable has froze me!—[*Aloud.*] What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent, as in our mutual vows—

Lyd. Friends' consent indeed! [*Peevishly.*

Abs. Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance—a little wealth and comfort may be endured after all. And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as—

Lyd. Lawyers! I hate lawyers!

Abs. Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the licence, and—

Lyd. The licence!—I hate licence!

Abs. Oh, my love! be not so unkind!—thus let me entreat— [*Kneeling.*

Lyd. Psha!—what signifies kneeling, when you know I *must* have you?

Abs. [*Rising.*] Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you.—If I have lost your heart—I resign the rest—[*Aside.*] 'Gad, I must try what a little *spirit* will do.

Lyd. [*Rising.*] Then, sir, let me tell you, the

interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of fraud. — What, you have been treating *me* like a child! — humouring my romance! and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

Abs. You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me — only hear —

Lyd. So, while *I* fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all — behold my hopes are to be crushed at once, by my aunt's consent and approbation — and *I* am myself the only dupe at last! — [*Walking about in a heat.*] But here, sir, here is the picture — Beverley's picture! [*taking a miniature from her bosom*] which I have worn, night and day, in spite of threats and entreaties! — There, sir, [*flings it to him*] and be assured I throw the original from my heart as easily.

Abs. Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that. — Here, [*taking out a picture*] here is Miss Lydia Languish. — What a difference! — ay, *there* is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave soul and spirit to my hopes! — those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar! and there the half-resentful blush, that *would* have checked the ardour of my thanks! — Well, all that's past! — all over indeed! — There, madam — in beauty, that copy is not equal to you, but in my mind its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such — that — I cannot find in my heart to part with it. [*Puts it up again.*]

Lyd. [*Softening.*] 'T is *your own* doing, sir — I — I — I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

Abs. Oh, most certainly — sure, now, this is much better than being in love! — ha! ha! ha! — there's

some spirit in *this*! — What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises: — all that 's of no consequence, you know. — To be sure people will say that miss don't know her own mind — but never mind that! Or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint that the gentleman grew tired of the lady and forsook her — but don't let that fret you.

Lyd. There is no bearing his insolence.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

Reënter MRS. MALAPROP and SIR ANTHONY
ABSOLUTE.

Mrs. Mal. [*Entering.*] Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

Lyd. This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate! [*Sobbing.*]

Sir Anth. What the devil 's the matter now! — Zounds. Mrs. Malaprop, this is the oddest *billing* and *cooing* I ever heard! — but what the deuce is the meaning of it? — I am quite astonished!

Abs. Ask the lady, sir.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, mercy! — I'm quite analyzed, for my part! — Why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

Lyd. Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

Sir Anth. Zounds! I shall be in a frenzy! — Why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, there 's no more trick, is there? — you are not like Cerberus, *three* gentlemen at once, are you?

Abs. You 'll not let me speak — I say the lady can account for this much better than I can.

Lyd. Ma'am, you once commanded me never to think of Beverley again — there is the man — I now

obey you: for, from this moment, I renounce him forever. *[Exit LYDIA.]*

Mrs. Mal. Oh, mercy! and miracles! what a turn here is — why sure, captain, you have n't behaved disrespectfully to my niece?

Sir Anth. Ha! ha! ha! — ha! ha! ha! — now I see it. Ha! ha! ha! — now I see it — you have been too lively, Jack.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word —

Sir Anth. Come, no lying, Jack — I'm sure 't was so.

Mrs. Mal. O Lud! Sir Anthony! — Oh, fie, captain!

Abs. Upon my soul, ma'am —

Sir Anth. Come, no excuses, Jack; why, your father, you rogue, was so before you: — the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient. — Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia! why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have.

Abs. By all that's good, sir —

Sir Anth. Zounds! say no more, I tell you — Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace. — You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop: — you must tell her 't is Jack's way — tell her 't is all our ways — it runs in the blood of our family! — Come away, Jack — Ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Malaprop — a young villain!

[Pushes him out.]

Mrs. Mal. O! Sir Anthony! — Oh, fie, captain!

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE III. — *The North Parade.**Enter* SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.

Sir Luc. I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself! Upon my conscience! these officers are always in one's way in love affairs: — I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me! And I wonder too what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them — unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth. Ha! is n't this the captain coming? — faith it is! — There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow that is mighty provoking! Who the devil is he talking to? *[Steps aside.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Abs. [Aside.] To what fine purpose I have been plotting! a noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul! — a little gypsy! — I did not think her romance could have made her so damned absurd either. 'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life! — I could cut my own throat; or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world!

Sir Luc. Oh, faith! I'm in the luck of it. I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose — to be sure I'm just come in the nick! Now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly. — *[Goes up to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]* — With regard to that matter, captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

Abs. Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant:—because, sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

Sir Luc. That's no reason. For, give me leave to tell you, a man may think an untruth as well as speak one.

Abs. Very true, sir; but if a man never utters his thoughts, I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

Sir Luc. Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing.

Abs. Hark'ee, Sir Lucius; if I had not before known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered it at this interview: for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive.

Sir Luc. I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension. —[*Bowing.*] You have named the very thing I would be at.

Abs. Very well, sir; I shall certainly not balk your inclinations. — But I should be glad you would please to explain your motives.

Sir Luc. Pray sir, be easy; — the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands; — we should only spoil it by trying to explain it. — However, your memory is very short, or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week. — So, no more, but name your time and place.

Abs. Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better; let it be this evening — here by the Spring Gardens. — We shall scarcely be interrupted.

Sir Luc. Faith! that same interruption in affairs of this nature shows very great ill-breeding. — I don't know what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother, that

a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness. However, if it's the same to you, captain, I should take it as a particular kindness if you'd let us meet in King's-Mead-Fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

Abs. 'T is the same to me exactly. — A little after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously.

Sir Luc. If you please, sir; there will be very pretty small-sword light, though it won't do for a long shot. — So that matter's settled, and my mind's at ease. [*Exit* SIR LUCIUS.]

Enter FAULKLAND, meeting ABSOLUTE.

Abs. Well met! I was going to look for you. — O Faulkland! all the demons of spite and disappointment have conspired against me! I'm so vexed, that if I had not the prospect of a resource in being knocked o' the head by-and-by, I should scarce have spirits to tell you the cause.

Faulk. What can you mean? — Has Lydia changed her mind? — I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

Abs. Ay, just as the eyes do of a person who squints: when her love-eye was fixed on me, t' other, her eye of duty, was finely obliqued: but when duty bid her point that the same way, off t' other turned on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown!

Faulk. But what's the resource you —

Abs. Oh, to wind up the whole, a good-natured Irishman here has — [*Mimicking* SIR LUCIUS.] — begged leave to have the pleasure of cutting my throat: and I mean to indulge him — that's all.

Faulk. Prithee, be serious!

Abs. 'Tis fact, upon my soul! Sir Lucius O'Trigger — you know him by sight — for some affront, — which I am sure I never intended, has obliged me to meet him this evening at six o'clock: 't is on that account I wished to see you; — you must go with me.

Faulk. Nay, there must be some mistake, sure. Sir Lucius shall explain himself, and I dare say matters may be accommodated. But this evening did you say? I wish it had been any other time.

Abs. Why? there will be light enough: there will (as Sir Lucius says), "be very pretty small-sword light, though it will not do for a long shot." Confound his long shots!

Faulk. But I am myself a good deal ruffled by a difference I have had with Julia — my vile tormenting temper has made me treat her so cruelly, that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

Abs. By heavens! Faulkland, you don't deserve her!

Enter SERVANT, gives FAULKLAND a letter, and exit.

Faulk. O Jack! this is from Julia. I dread to open it! I fear it may be to take a last leave! — perhaps to bid me return her letters, and restore — oh, how I suffer for my folly!

Abs. Here, let me see. — [*Takes the letter and opens it.*] Ay, a final sentence, indeed! — 't is all over with you, faith!

Faulk. Nay, Jack, don't keep me in suspense!

Abs. Hear then. — [*Reads.*] *As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not*

add a word on the subject. I wish to speak with you as soon as possible. Yours ever and truly, JULIA. There's stubbornness and resentment for you!—
[*Gives him the letter.*] Why, man, you don't seem one whit the happier at this!

Faulk. Oh, yes, I am: but — but —

Abs. Confound your *buts*! you never hear anything that would make another man bless himself, but you immediately damn it with a *but*!

Faulk. Now, Jack, as you are my friend, own honestly — don't you think there is something forward, something indelicate, in this haste to forgive? Women should never sue for reconciliation: that should always come from us. They should retain their coldness till wooed to kindness; and their pardon, like their love, should "not unsought be won."

Abs. I have not patience to listen to you! thou'rt incorrigible! so say no more on the subject. I must go to settle a few matters. Let me see you before six, remember, at my lodgings. A poor industrious devil like me, who have toiled, and drudged, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly, may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little; but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim, who has no difficulties but of his own creating, is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion! [Exit ABSOLUTE.]

Faulk. I feel his reproaches; yet I would not change this too exquisite nicety for the gross content with which *he* tramples on the thorns of love! — His engaging me in this duel has started an idea in my head, which I will instantly pursue. I'll use it as the touchstone of Julia's sincerity and disinterestedness. If her love prove pure and sterling ore, my name will rest on it with honour; and once I've

stamped it there, I lay aside my doubts forever! But if the dross of selfishness, the alloy of pride, predominate, 't will be best to leave her as a toy for some less cautious fool to sigh for!

[*Exit* FAULKLAND.]



ACT V.

SCENE I. — JULIA'S *Dressing-room*.

JULIA *discovered alone*.

Jul. How this message has alarmed me! what dreadful accident can he mean? why such charge to be alone? — O Faulkland! — how many unhappy moments — how many tears have you cost me.

Enter FAULKLAND.

Jul. What means this? — why this caution, Faulkland?

Faulk. Alas! Julia, I am come to take a long farewell.

Jul. Heavens! what do you mean?

Faulk. You see before you a wretch whose life is forfeited. Nay, start not! — the infirmity of my temper has drawn all this misery on me. I left you fretful and passionate — an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel — the event is, that I must fly this kingdom instantly. O Julia, had I been so fortunate as to have called you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my banishment!

Jul. My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune: had these adverse circumstances arisen from a less fatal cause, I should have felt strong comfort in the thought that I could now chase from your bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my love. My heart has long known no other

guardian — I now entrust my person to your honour — we will fly together. When safe from pursuit, my father's will may be fulfilled — and I receive a legal claim to be the partner of your sorrows and tenderest comforter. Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen regret to slumbering; while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand, shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction.

Faulk. O Julia! I am bankrupt in gratitude! but the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a resolution. — Would you not wish some hours to weigh the advantages you forego, and what little compensation poor Faulkland can make you beside his solitary love?

Jul. I ask not a moment. No, Faulkland, I have loved you for yourself: and if I now, more than ever, prize the solemn engagement which so long has pledged us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard aspersions on my fame, and puts the seal of duty to an act of love. But let us not linger. Perhaps this delay —

Faulk. 'T will be better I should not venture out again till dark. Yet am I grieved to think what numberless distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition!

Jul. Perhaps your fortune may be forfeited by this unhappy act. — I know not whether 't is so; but sure that alone can never make us unhappy. The little I have will be sufficient to support us; and exile never should be splendid.

Faulk. Ay, but in such an abject state of life, my wounded pride perhaps may increase the natural fretfulness of my temper, till I become a rude, morose companion, beyond your patience to endure. Per-

haps the recollection of a deed my conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial fits, that I shall hate the tenderness that would relieve me, break from your arms, and quarrel with your fondness !

Jul. If your thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate spirit to watch over and console you : one who, by bearing *your* infirmities with gentleness and resignation, may teach you *so* to bear the evils of your fortune.

Faulk. Julia, I have proved you to the quick ! and with this useless device I throw away all my doubts. How shall I plead to be forgiven this last unworthy effect of my restless, unsatisfied disposition ?

Jul. Has no such disaster happened as you related ?

Faulk. I am ashamed to own that it was pretended ; yet in pity, Julia, do not kill me with resenting a fault which never can be repeated : but sealing, this once, my pardon, let me to-morrow, in the face of Heaven, receive my future guide and monitress, and expiate my past folly by years of tender adoration.

Jul. Hold, Faulkland ! — that you are free from a crime, which I before feared to name, Heaven knows how sincerely I rejoice ! These are tears of thankfulness for that ! But that your cruel doubts should have urged you to an imposition that has wrung my heart gives me now a pang more keen than I can express !

Faulk. By Heavens ! Julia —

Jul. Yet hear me. — My father loved you, Faulkland ! and you preserved the life that tender parent gave me ; in his presence I pledged my hand — joyfully pledged it — where before I had given my

heart. When, soon after, I lost that parent, it seemed to me that Providence had, in Faulkland, shown me whither to transfer, without a pause, my grateful duty, as well as my affection: hence I have been content to bear from you what pride and delicacy would have forbid me from another. I will not upbraid you by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity —

Faulk. I confess it all! yet hear —

Jul. After such a year of trial, I might have flattered myself that I should not have been insulted with a new probation of my sincerity, as cruel as unnecessary! I now see it is not in your nature to be content or confident in love. With this conviction — I never will be yours. While I had hopes that my persevering attention and unrepublishing kindness might in time reform your temper, I should have been happy to have gained a dearer influence over you; but I will not furnish you with a licensed power to keep alive an incorrigible fault at the expense of one who never would contend with you.

Faulk. Nay, but Julia, by my soul and honour, if after this —

Jul. But one word more. — As my faith has once been given to you, I never will barter it with another. — I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity; and the dearest blessing I can ask of Heaven to send you will be to charm you from that unhappy temper which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement. — All I request of *you* is, that you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of, let it not be your *least* regret, that it lost you the love of one — who would have followed you in beggary through the world!

[*Exit.*

Faulk. She 's gone — forever! — There was an awful resolution in her manner, that riveted me to my place. — O fool! — dolt! — barbarian! Cursed as I am, with more imperfections than my fellow wretches, kind fortune sent a heaven-gifted cherub to my aid, and, like a ruffian, I have driven her from my side! — I must now haste to my appointment. Well, my mind is tuned for such a scene. I shall wish only to become a principal in it, and reverse the tale my cursed folly put me upon forging here. — O Love! — tormentor! — fiend! — whose influence, like the moon's, acting on men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but, meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course and urges sensibility to madness! [*Exit.*]

Enter LYDIA and MAID.

Maid. My mistress, ma'am, I know, was just here now — perhaps she is only in the next room. [*Exit* MAID.]

Lyd. Heigh-ho! Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him. [*Reënter* JULIA.] O Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation. — Lud! child, what's the matter with you? You have been crying! — I'll be hanged if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

Jul. You mistake the cause of my uneasiness! — Something *has* flurried me a little. Nothing that you can guess at. — [*Aside.*] I would not accuse Faulkland to a sister!

Lyd. Ah! whatever vexations you may have, I can assure you mine surpass them. You know who Beverley proves to be?

Jul. I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr.

Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the person you took him for I should not have accepted your confidence on the subject, without a serious endeavour to counteract your caprice.

Lyd. So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one! But I don't care—I'll never have him.

Jul. Nay, Lydia——

Lyd. Why, is it not provoking? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last! There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!—so becoming a disguise!—so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop—and such paragraphs in the newspapers!—Oh, I shall die with disappointment.

Jul. I don't wonder at it!

Lyd. Now—sad reverse!—what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparations with a bishop's license, and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar; or perhaps be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster! Oh that I should live to hear myself called Spinster!

Jul. Melancholy indeed!

Lyd. How mortifying, to remember the dear delicious shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow!—How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue! There would he kneel to me in the snow,

and sneeze and cough so pathetically! he shivering with cold and I with apprehension! and while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame, and glow with mutual ardour! — Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love.

Jul. If I were in spirits, Lydia, I should chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man, who loves you with sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your caprice, which I know too well caprice can inflict.

Lyd. O Lud! what has brought my aunt here?

Enter MRS. MALAPROP, FAG, and DAVID.

Mrs. Mal. So! so! here's fine work! — here's fine suicide, parricide, and simulation, going on in the fields! and Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the antistrophe!

Jul. For Heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this?

Mrs. Mal. That gentleman can tell you — 't was he enveloped the affair to me.

Lyd. Do, sir, will you, inform us? [To FAG.

Fag. Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of breeding, if I delayed a moment to give all the information in my power to a lady so deeply interested in the affair as you are.

Lyd. But quick! quick, sir!

Fag. True, ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in divulging matters of this nature; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are flourishing on the subject, two or three lives may be lost!

Lyd. O patience! — Do, ma'am, for Heaven's sake! tell us what is the matter?

Mrs. Mal. Why, murder 's the matter! slaughter 's the matter! killing 's the matter! — but he can tell you the perpendiculars.

Lyd. Then, prithee, sir, be brief.

Fag. Why then, ma'am, as to murder — I cannot take upon me to say — and as to slaughter, or manslaughter, that will be as the jury finds it.

Lyd. But who, sir — who are engaged in this?

Fag. Faith, ma'am, one is a young gentleman whom I should be very sorry anything was to happen to — a very pretty behaved gentleman! We have lived much together, and always on terms.

Lyd. But who is this? who? who? who?

Fag. My master, ma'am — my master — I speak of my master.

Lyd. Heavens! What, Captain Absolute!

Mrs. Mal. Oh, to be sure, you are frightened now!

Jul. But who are with him, sir?

Fag. As to the rest, ma'am, this gentleman can inform you better than I.

Jul. Do speak, friend. [To DAVID.]

Dav. Look'ee, my lady — by the mass! there 's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with firearms, firelocks, fire-engines, fire-screens, fire-office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside! — This, my lady, I say, has an angry favour.

Jul. But who is there beside Captain Absolute, friend?

Dav. My poor master — under favour for mentioning him first. You know me, my lady — I am David — and my master, of course, is, or *was*, Squire Acres. Then comes Squire Faulkland.

Jul. Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

Mrs. Mal. O fie! — it would be very inelegant in us: — we should only participate things.

Dav. Ah! do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives — they are desperately given, believe me. — Above all, there is that blood-thirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger? O mercy! have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape? — Why, how you stand, girl! you have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire petrifications!

Lyd. What are we to do, madam?

Mrs. Mal. Why fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief! — Here, friend, you can show us the place?

Fag. If you please, ma'am, I will conduct you. — David, do you look for Sir Anthony. [*Exit DAVID.*

Mrs. Mal. Come, girls! this gentleman will exhort us. — Come, sir, you're our envoy — lead the way, and we'll precede.

Fag. Not a step before the ladies for the world!

Mrs. Mal. You're sure you know the spot?

Fag. I think I can find it, ma'am; and one good thing is, we shall hear the report of the pistols as we draw near, so we can't well miss them; — never fear, ma'am, never fear. [*Exeunt, he talking.*

SCENE II. — *The South Parade.*

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, putting his sword under his great coat.

Abs. A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog. — How pro-

voking this is in Faulkland!—never punctual! I shall be obliged to go without him at last. — Oh, the devil! here 's Sir Anthony!—how shall I escape him?

[Muffles up his face, and takes a circle to go off.]

Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.

Sir Anth. How one may be deceived at a little distance! only that I see he don't know me, I could have sworn that was Jack!—Hey! Gad's life! it is. — Why, Jack, what are you afraid of? hey!—sure I 'm right. — Why, Jack, — Jack Absolute!

[Goes up to him.]

Abs. Really, sir, you have the advantage of me: — I don't remember ever to have had the honour — my name is Saunderson, at your service.

Sir Anth. Sir, I beg your pardon — I took you — hey? — why, zounds! it is — Stay — *[Looks up to his face.]* So, so — your humble servant, Mr. Saunderson! — Why, you scoundrel, what tricks are you after now?

Abs. Oh, a joke, sir, a joke! — I came here on purpose to look for you, sir.

Sir Anth. You did! well, I am glad you were so lucky:—but what are you muffled up so for? — what 's this for? — hey!

Abs. 'T is cool sir; is n't it? — rather chilly somehow — but I shall be late — I have a particular engagement.

Sir Anth. Stay! — Why, I thought you were looking for me? — Pray, Jack, where is 't you are going?

Abs. Going, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay, — where are you going?

Abs. Where am I going?

Sir Anth. You unmannerly puppy!

Abs. I was going, sir, to — to — to — to Lydia —

sir, to Lydia — to make matters up if I could ; — and I was looking for you, sir, to — to —

Sir Anth. To go with you, I suppose. — Well, come along.

Abs. Oh ! Zounds ! no, sir, not for the world ! — I wished to meet with you, sir, — to — to — to — You find it cool, I 'm sure, sir — you 'd better not stay out.

Sir Anth. Cool ! — not at all. — Well, Jack — and what will you say to Lydia ?

Abs. Oh, sir, beg her pardon, humour her — promise and vow : but I detain you, sir — consider the cold air on your gout.

Sir Anth. Oh, not at all ! — not at all ! I 'm in no hurry. — Ah ! Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here — [*Putting his hand to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE'S breast.*] Hey ! what the deuce have you got here ?

Abs. Nothing, sir — nothing.

Sir Anth. What 's this ? — here 's something damned hard.

Abs. Oh, trinkets, sir ! trinkets ! — a bauble for Lydia !

Sir Anth. Nay, let me see your taste. — [*Pulls his coat open, the sword falls.*] Trinkets ! — a bauble for Lydia ! — Zounds ! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you ?

Abs. Ha ! ha ! ha ! — I thought it would divert you, sir, though I did n't mean to tell you till afterwards.

Sir Anth. You did n't ? — Yes, this is a very diverting trinket, truly !

Abs. Sir, I 'll explain to you. — You know, sir, Lydia is romantic, devilish romantic, and very absurd of course : now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to

forgive me, to unsheath this sword, and swear — I 'll fall upon its point, and expire at her feet!

Sir Anth. Fall upon a fiddlestick's end! — why, I suppose it is the very thing that would please her. — Get along, you fool!

Abs. Well, sir, you shall hear of my success — you shall hear. — *O Lydia!* — *forgive me, or this pointed steel* — says I.

Sir Anth. *O booby!* stab away and welcome — says she. — Get along and damn your trinkets!

[*Exit* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]

Enter DAVID, *running.*

Dav. Stop him! Stop him! Murder! Thief! Fire! — Stop fire! Stop fire! — O Sir Anthony — call! call! bid 'm stop! Murder! Fire!

Sir Anth. Fire! Murder! — Where?

Dav. Oons! he's out of sight! and I'm out of breath! for my part! O Sir Anthony, why did n't you stop him? why did n't you stop him?

Sir Anth. Zounds! the fellow's mad! — Stop whom? stop Jack?

Dav. Ay, the captain, sir! — there's murder and slaughter —

Sir Anth. Murder!

Dav. Ay, please you, Sir Anthony, there's all kinds of murder, all sorts of slaughter to be seen in the fields: there's fighting going on, sir — bloody sword-and-gun fighting!

Sir Anth. Who are going to fight, dunce?

Dav. Everybody that I know of, Sir Anthony: — everybody is going to fight, my poor master, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, your son, the captain —

Sir Anth. Oh, the dog! — I see his tricks. — Do you know the place?

Dav. King's-Mead-Fields.

Sir Anth. You know the way?

Dav. Not an inch ; but I 'll call the mayor — aldermen — constables — churchwardens — and beadles — we can't be too many to part them.

Sir Anth. Come along — give me your shoulder ! we 'll get assistance as we go — the lying villain — Well, I shall be in such a frenzy ! — So — this was the history of his trinkets ! I 'll bauble him !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *King's-Mead-Fields.*

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER and ACRES, with pistols.

Acres. By my valour ! then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance. Odds levels and aims ! — I say it is a good distance.

Sir Luc. Is it for muskets or small field-pieces ? Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave those things to me. — Stay now — I 'll show you. — [*Measures paces along the stage.*] There now, that is a very pretty distance — a pretty gentleman's distance.

Acres. Zounds ! we might as well fight in a sentry-box ! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off, the cooler I shall take my aim.

Sir Luc. Faith ! then I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight !

Acres. No, Sir Lucius ; but I should think forty or eight-and-thirty yards —

Sir Luc. Pho ! pho ! nonsense ! three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

Acres. Odds bullets, no! — by my valour! there is no merit in killing him so near: do, my dear Sir Lucius, let me bring him down at a long shot: — a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me!

Sir Luc. Well, the gentleman's friend and I must settle that. — But tell me now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there any little will or commission I could execute for you?

Acres. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius — but I don't understand —

Sir Luc. Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk — and if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it — I say it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters.

Acres. A quietus!

Sir Luc. For instance, now — if that should be the case — would you choose to be pickled and sent home? — or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey? — I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

Acres. Pickled! — Snug lying in the Abbey! — Odds tremors! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

Sir Luc. I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before?

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, never before.

Sir Luc. Ah! that's a pity — there's nothing like being used to a thing. — Pray now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot?

Acres. Odds files! — I've practised that — there, Sir Lucius — there. — [*Puts himself in an attitude.*] A side-front, hey? Odd! I'll make myself small enough: I'll stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. Now — you're quite out — for if you stand so when I take my aim —

[*Levelling at him.*]

Acres. Zounds! Sir Lucius — are you sure it is not cocked?

Sir Luc. Never fear.

Acres. But — but — you don't know — it may go off of its own head!

Sir Luc. Pho! be easy. — Well, now if I hit you in the body my bullet has a double chance — for if it misses a vital part of your right side — 't will be very hard if it don't succeed on the left!

Acres. A vital part!

Sir Luc. But, there — fix yourself so — [*placing him*] — let him see the broadside of your full front — there — now a ball or two may pass clean through your body, and never do any harm at all.

Acres. Clean through me! — a ball or two clean through me!

Sir Luc. Ay — may they — and it is much the genteelest attitude into the bargain.

Acres. Look'ee! Sir Lucius — I'd just as lieve be shot in an awkward posture as a genteel one — so, by my valour! I will stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. [*Looking at his watch.*] Sure they don't mean to disappoint us — Hah! — no, faith — I think I see them coming.

Acres. Hey! — what! — coming! —

Sir Luc. Ay. — Who are those yonder getting over the stile?

Acres. There are two of them indeed! — well — let them come — hey, Sir Lucius! — we — we — we — we — won't run.

Sir Luc. Run!

Acres. No — I say — we *won't* run, by my valour!

Sir Luc. What the devil's the matter with you?

Acres. Nothing — nothing — my dear friend — my

dear Sir Lucius — but I — I — I don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did.

Sir Luc. O fie! — consider your honour.

Acres. Ay — true — my honour. Do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two every now and then about my honour.

Sir Luc. Well, here they're coming. [*Looking.*

Acres. Sir Lucius — if I wa'n't with you, I should almost think I was afraid. — If my valour should leave me! — Valour will come and go.

Sir Luc. Then pray keep it fast, while you have it.

Acres. Sir Lucius — I doubt it is going — yes — my valour is certainly going! — it is sneaking off! — I feel it oozing out as it were, at the palms of my hands!

Sir Luc. Your honour — your honour. — Here they are.

Acres. O mercy! — now — that I was safe at Clod-Hall! or could be shot before I was aware!

Enter FAULKLAND and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Sir Luc. Gentlemen, your most obedient. — Hah! — what, Captain Absolute! — So, I suppose, sir, you are come here, just like myself — to do a kind office, first for your friend — then to proceed to business on your own account.

Acres. What, Jack! — my dear Jack! — my dear friend!

Abs. Hark'ee, Bob, Beverley's at hand.

Sir Luc. Well, Mr. Acres, — I don't blame your saluting the gentleman civilly. — [*To FAULKLAND.*] So, Mr. Beverley, if you'll choose your weapons, the captain and I will measure the ground.

Faulk. My weapons, sir.

Acres. Odds life! Sir Lucius, I'm not going to fight Mr. Faulkland; these are my particular friends.

Sir Luc. What, sir, did you not come here to fight Mr. Acres?

Faulk. Not I, upon my word, sir.

Sir Luc. Well, now, that's mighty provoking! But I hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there are three of us come on purpose for the game — you won't be so cantankerous as to spoil the party by sitting out.

Abs. O pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir Lucius.

Faulk. Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the matter —

Acres. No, no, Mr. Faulkland; — I'll bear my disappointment like a Christian. — Look'ee, Sir Lucius, there's no occasion at all for me to fight; and if it is the same to you, I'd as lieve let it alone.

Sir Luc. Observe me, Mr. Acres — I must not be trifled with. You have — certainly challenged somebody — and you came here to fight him. — Now, if that gentleman is willing to represent him — I can't see, for my soul, why it is n't just the same thing.

Acres. Why no — Sir Lucius — I tell you 't is one Beverley I've challenged — a fellow, you see, that dare not show his face! — If *he* were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly! —

Abs. Hold, Bob — let me set you right — there is no such man as Beverley in the case. — The person who assumed that name is before you; and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please.

Sir Luc. Well, this is lucky. — Now you have an opportunity —

Acres. What, quarrel with my dear friend Jack Absolute? not if he were fifty Beverleys! Zounds! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural.

Sir Luc. Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has *oozed* away with a vengeance.

Acres. Not in the least! Odds backs and abettors! I'll be your second with all my heart — and if you should get a *quietus* you may command me entirely. I'll get you *snug lying* in the *Abbey here*; or *pickle* you, and send you over to Blunderbuss-Hall, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure.

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! you are little better than a coward.

Acres. Mind, gentlemen, he calls me a *coward*; coward was the word, by my valour.

Sir Luc. Well, sir?

Acres. Look'ee, Sir Lucius, 't is n't that I mind the word coward — *coward* may be said in joke — But if you had called me a *poltroon*, odds daggers and balls —

Sir Luc. Well, sir?

Acres. — I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

Sir Luc. Pho! you are beneath my notice.

Abs. Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres — He is a most *determined dog* — called in the country *Fighting' Bob*. — He generally *kills a man a week* — don't you, Bob?

Acres. Ay — at home! —

Sir Luc. Well, then, captain, 't is we must begin — so come out, my little counsellor — [*Draws his sword*] — and ask the gentleman whether he will resign the lady without forcing you to proceed against him?

Abs. Come on then, sir — [*Draws*]; since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE, DAVID, MRS. MALAPROP, LYDIA, and JULIA.

Dav. Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony; knock down my master in particular; and bind his hands over to their good behaviour!

Sir Anth. Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy — how came you in a duel, sir?

Abs. Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I; 't was he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his majesty.

Sir Anth. Here 's a pretty fellow; I catch him going to cut a man's throat, and he tells me he serves his majesty! — Zounds! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects?

Abs. Sir, I tell you! that gentleman called me out, without explaining his reasons.

Sir Anth. Gad! sir, how came you to call my son out, without explaining your reasons?

Sir Luc. Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.

Sir Anth. Zounds! Jack, how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?

Mrs. Mal. Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies — Captain Absolute, come here — How could you intimidate us so? — Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you.

Abs. For fear I should be killed, or escape, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Nay, no delusions to the past — Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

Sir Luc. With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here — I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence. — Now mark —

Lyd. What is it you mean, sir?

Sir Luc. Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now — this is no time for trifling.

Lyd. 'T is true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections.

Abs. O! my little angel, say you so? — Sir Lucius — I perceive there must be some mistake here, with regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you. I can only say that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced that I should not fear to support a real injury — you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency — I ask your pardon. — But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever.

Sir Anth. Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

Acres. Mind, I give up all my claim — I make no pretensions to anything in the world — and if I can't get a wife without fighting for her, by my valour! I'll live a bachelor.

Sir Luc. Captain, give me your hand — an affront handsomely acknowledged becomes an obligation; — and as for the lady — if she chooses to deny her own handwriting, here — [Takes out letters.

Mrs. Mal. O, he will dissolve my mystery! — Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake, — perhaps I can illuminate —

Sir Luc. Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business. — Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

Lyd. Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not.

[Walks aside with CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger — ungrateful as

you are — I own the soft impeachment — pardon my blushes, I am Delia.

Sir Luc. You Delia — pho ! pho ! be easy.

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou barbarous Vandyke — those letters are mine — When you are more sensible of my benignity — perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

Sir Luc. Mrs. Malaprop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension ; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick on me, I am equally beholden to you. — And to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute, since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain.

Abs. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius ; but here's my friend, Fighting Bob, unprovided for.

Sir Luc. Hah ! little Valour — here, will you make your fortune ?

Acres. Odds wrinkles ! No. — But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive ; but if ever I give you a chance of *pickling* me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all.

Sir Anth. Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down — you are in your bloom yet.

Mrs. Mal. O Sir Anthony — men are all barbarians. [*All retire but JULIA and FAULKLAND.*]

Jul. [*Aside.*] He seems dejected and unhappy — not sullen ; there was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me — O woman ! how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak !

Faulk. Julia ! — how can I sue for what I so little deserve ? I dare not presume — yet Hope is the child of Penitence.

Jul. Oh ! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my heart

honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

Faulk. Now I shall be blest indeed !

Sir Anth. [*Coming forward.*] What's going on here ? — So you have been quarrelling too, I warrant ! — Come, Julia, I never interfered before ; but let me have a hand in the matter at last. — All the fault I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed from what he calls the delicacy and warmth of his affection for you. — There, marry him directly, Julia ; you'll find he'll mend surprisingly !

[*The rest come forward.*]

Sir Luc. Come, now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person, but what is content ; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better —

Acres. You are right, Sir Lucius. — So Jack, I wish you joy — Mr. Faulkland the same. — Ladies, — come now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, odds tabours and pipes ! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms — and I insist on your all meeting me there.

Sir Anth. 'Gad ! sir, I like your spirit ; and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

Faulk. Our partners are stolen from us, Jack — I hope to be congratulated by each other — *yours* for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination, which might have betrayed an innocent heart ; and *mine*, for having, by her gentleness and candour, reformed the unhappy temper of one who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored.

Abs. Well, Jack, we have both tasted the bitters, as well as the sweets of love; with this difference only, that *you* always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while *I*——

Lyd. Was always obliged to *me* for it, hey! Mr. Modesty? —— But come, no more of that — our happiness is now as unalloyed as general.

Jul. Then let us study to preserve it so: and while Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting. — When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropped!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

EPILOGUE.

BY THE AUTHOR.

SPOKEN BY MRS. BULKLEY.

LADIES, for *you* — I heard our poet say —
He 'd try to coax some *moral* from his play :
“ One moral's plain,” cried I, “ without more fuss :
Man's social happiness all rests on us :
Through all the drama — whether damn'd or not —
Love gilds the *scene*, and *women* guide the *plot*.
From every rank obedience is our due —
D'ye doubt ? — The world's great stage shall prove
it true.”

The cit, well skill'd to shun domestic strife,
Will sup abroad ; but first he 'll ask his *wife* :
John Trot, his friend, for once will do the same,
But then — he 'll just step *home to tell his dame*.

The *surly Squire* at noon resolves to rule,
And half the day — Zounds ! madam is a fool !
Convinced at night, the vanquish'd victor says,
Ah, Kate ! you women *have such coaxing ways* !

The *jolly Toper* chides each tardy blade,
Till reeling Bacchus calls on Love for aid :
Then with each toast he sees fair bumpers swim,
And kisses Chloe on the sparkling brim !

Nay, I have heard that Statesmen — great and
wise —
Will *sometimes* counsel with a lady's eyes !

The servile suitors watch her various face,
She smiles preferment, or she frowns disgrace,
Curtsies a pension here — there nods a place.

Nor with less awe, in scenes of humbler life,
Is *view'd* the *mistress*, or is *heard* the *wife*.
The poorest peasant of the poorest soil,
The child of poverty, and heir to toil,
Early from radiant Love's impartial light
Steals one small spark to cheer this world of night :
Dear spark ! that oft, through winter's chilling woes
Is all the warmth his little cottage knows !

The wandering *Tar*, who not for *years* has press'd
The widow'd partner of his *day* of rest,
On the cold deck, far from her arms removed,
Still hums the ditty which his Susan loved ;
And while around the cadence rude is blown,
The boatswain whistles in a softer tone.

The *Soldier*, fairly proud of wounds and toil,
Pants for the *triumph* of his Nancy's smile ;
But ere the battle should he list' her cries,
The lover trembles — and the hero dies !
That heart, by war and honour steel'd to fear,
Droops on a sigh, and sickens at a tear !

But ye more cautious, ye nice-judging few,
Who give to Beauty only Beauty's due,
Though friends to Love — *ye* view with deep regret
Our conquests marr'd, our triumphs incomplete,
Till polish'd Wit more lasting charms disclose,
And Judgment fix the darts which Beauty throws !

In female breasts did sense and merit rule,
The lover's mind would ask no other school ;
Shamed into sense, the scholars of our eyes,
Our beaux from *gallantry* would soon be wise ;
Would gladly light, their homage to improve,
The lamp of Knowledge at the torch of Love !

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

EARLY in the spring of 1776 Richard Brinsley Sheridan succeeded David Garrick as the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. Within a little more than a year Sheridan had brought out the 'Rivals,' a comedy in five acts, 'St. Patrick's Day,' a farce in one act, and the 'Duenna,' an opera in three acts. Great expectations were excited by the announcement of his first play at his own theatre. The production of the 'Trip to Scarborough' in February, 1777, was only a temporary disappointment, for it was soon noised abroad that a more important comedy in five acts was in preparation. At last, on May 8, 1777, the 'School for Scandal' was acted for the first time on any stage.

Garrick had read the play, and he thought even more highly of it than he had thought of Mrs. Sheridan's 'Discovery' many years before. He aided the author with much practical advice, and volunteered to write the prologue, a form of composition for which his lively fancy and neat versification were particularly suited. The great hopes excited for the comedy barely escaped disappointment — for on the night before the first performance, as Sheridan told the House of Commons many years later, he was informed that it could not be performed, as a license was refused. It happened at this time there was the famous city contest for the office of chamberlain,

between Wilkes and Hopkins. The latter had been charged with some practices similar to those of Moses, the Jew, in lending money to young men under age, and it was supposed that the character of the play was levelled at him, in order to injure him in his contest, in which he was supported by the ministerial interest. In the warmth of a contested election, the piece was represented as a factious and seditious opposition to a court candidate. The author, however, went to Lord Hertford, then lord chamberlain, who laughed at the affair and gave the license. Sheridan told Lord Byron that the next night, after the grand success of the 'School for Scandal,' he was knocked down and taken to the watch-house, for making a row in the street, and being found intoxicated by the watchman.

Perhaps this was only a bit of Hibernian hyperbole, though a man's head might well reel under a triumph so overwhelming. There seems to have been hardly a dissenting voice. Merry — Della-Cruscan Merry, the future husband of Miss Brunton, who, under his name, was afterward the leading actress of America — did, it is true, object to the great scandal-scene. "Why do not the *dramatis personæ*," he said, "stop talking, and let the play go on?" The comedy was a success from the rising of the curtain, but it was the falling of the screen — although Garrick thought the actors stood a little too long without moving — which raised the audience to the highest degree of enthusiasm. Reynolds, the dramatist, relates that as he was passing about nine on this evening through the pit-passage, "I heard such a tremendous noise over my head that, fearing the theatre was proceeding to fall about it, I ran for my life; but found the next morning that the noise did

not arise from the falling of the house, but from the falling of the screen in the fourth act, so violent and tumultuous were the applause and laughter."

The singular success of the 'School for Scandal' seems to have been greatly aided by the unusual excellence of the acting. Charles Lamb says, "No piece was ever so completely cast in all its parts as this *manager's* comedy." Sheridan chose his performers, and modified his play, if needed, to suit their peculiarities, with the same shrewdness that he showed in all such matters. When reproached with not having written a love-scene for Charles and Maria, he said that it was because neither Mr. Smith nor Miss P. Hopkins (who played the parts) was an adept at stage love-making. King, the original Lord Ogleby in the 'Clandestine Marriage'—a part written by Garrick himself—was Sir Peter; and Mrs. Abington was Lady Teazle. No one was better suited than John Palmer, from whom Sheridan may well have derived some hints of Joseph Surface; Boaden relates a characteristic interview between him and the manager, when he returned to the theatre after an escapade. "My dear Mr. Sheridan," began the actor, with clasped hands and penitent humility, "if you could but know what I feel at this moment *here!*" laying one hand upon his heart. Sheridan, with his usual quickness, stopped him at once: "Why, Jack, you forgot *I wrote it!*" Palmer declared that the manager's wit cost him something, "for I made him add three pounds per week to the salary I had before my desertion." The other actors were hardly inferior to King and Palmer. Parsons, afterward the original Sir Fretful Plagiary, was Crabtree; and Dodd, who has been called "the Prince of Pink Heels and Soul of Empty Eminence," was Sir

Benjamin Backbite. The various characters fitted the actors who played them with the most exact nicety; and the result was a varied and harmonious performance of the entire comedy. The acting showed the smoothness, and the symmetry, and the due subordination of the parts to the whole, which is the highest, and, alas! the rarest of dramatic excellences. Walpole has noted that there were more parts better played in the 'School for Scandal' than he almost ever remembered to have seen in any other play; and Charles Lamb thought it "some compensation for growing old, to have seen the 'School for Scandal' in its glory."

Dr. Watkins, in his unnecessary biography of Sheridan, saw fit to insinuate therein that Sheridan was not the real author of the 'School for Scandal,' but that it was the composition of a young lady, daughter of a merchant in Thames Street, who had left it with Sheridan for his judgment as a manager, "soon after which the fair writer, who was then in a state of decline, went to Bristol Hot-Wells, where she died."

Pope well knew the type to which this Dr. Watkins belonged ("with him most authors steal their works or buy; Garth did not write his own 'Dispensary'"); and the story which Pope crippled, as if by anticipation, Moore readily brought to ground by the publication of the earlier and inchoate suggestions from which Sheridan finally formed the finished play. With the evidence of these growing and gathering fragments before us, we can trace the inception of the idea, and the slow accretion by which it got rounded at last into its present complex symmetry. Moore fills page after page of his life of Sheridan with extracts from the notes and drafts of two dis-

tinct plays — one containing the machinery of the scandalous college, to have been called possibly the 'Slanderers,' and the other setting before us the Teazles and the Surfaces. This latter was, perhaps, the two-act comedy which Sheridan announced to Mr. Linley in 1775, as being in preparation for the stage. The gradual amalgamation of these two distinct plots, the growth of the happy thought of using the malevolent tittle-tattle of the first play as a background to set off the intrigues of the second, can be clearly traced in the extracts given by Moore. In the eyes of some small critics this revelation of Sheridan's laborious method of working, this exhibition of the chips of his workshop has had a lowering effect on their opinion of Sheridan's ability. It is, perhaps, his own fault, for he affected laziness and sought the reputation of an off-hand wit. But the 'School for Scandal' is obviously not a spontaneous improvisation. Its symmetrical smoothness and perfect polish cost great labour. It did not spring full armed from the brain of ~~the author~~ — Jupiter was a god, and mere mortals must ~~struggle~~ ^{train} their poor brains long years to bring forth ~~wisdom~~ ^{wisdom}. No masterpiece was ever dashed off hurriedly. The power of hard work, and the willingness ~~to~~ ^{to} take pains, are among the attributes of the ~~highest~~ ^{highest} genius. Balzac had them; he spent the ~~whole~~ ^{whole} of the long winter night on a single sentence. ~~So~~ ^{So} did Sheridan; he told Ridgway, to whom ~~he~~ ^{he} sold the copyright of this very play, and who ~~for~~ ^{for} the manuscript again and again in ~~1775~~ ¹⁷⁷⁵. He had been for nineteen years endeavoring to satisfy himself with the style of the 'School for Scandal,' but had not yet succeeded. A drop of the first water, like this, is worth careful sipping, and even the chips are of value. Those

given to the world by Moore are curious in themselves, independent of their use in disproving the charge of literary larceny preferred by Dr. Watkins.

Since the publication of these extracts, those who seek to discredit Sheridan's originality have shifted their ground, and content themselves with drawing attention to the singular similarity of Joseph and Charles to Tom Jones and Blifil. They also remark upon the likeness of the scandal-scene to a satirical episode in the 'Misanthrope' of Molière, and on the likeness of Joseph Surface to Tartuffe. Taine, who seems sometimes to speak slightly of Sheridan, puts this accusation into most effective shape: "Sheridan took two characters from Fielding, Blifil and Tom Jones, two plays of Molière, 'Le Misanthrope' and 'Tartuffe,' and from his puissant materials, condensed with admirable cleverness, he has constructed the most brilliant fireworks imaginable."

A glance at the play itself will show this to be a most exaggerated statement. The use of Molière and Fielding is far slighter than alleged; and at most to what does it all amount? But little more than the outline and faint colouring of two characters, and of a very few incidents. While the play could not exist without them, they are far from the most important. Lady Teazle and Sir Peter, the screen-scene and the auction-scene — these are what made the success of the 'School for Scandal,' and not what Sheridan may have derived from Fielding and Molière. Nor is this borrowing at all as extensive as it may seem. Joseph is a hypocrite, so is Tartuffe, so is Blifil; but there are hypocrites and hypocrites, and the resemblance can scarcely be stretched much farther. The rather rustic and low word may be risked — vulgar Tom Jones may be as

may be to that light and easy gentleman Charles. Yet it seems probable that Sheridan found in Tom Jones the first idea of the contrasted brothers of the 'School for Scandal.' Boaden has even seen the embryonic suggestion of the fall of the screen in the dropping of the rug in Molly Seagrim's room, discovering the philosopher Square. Now, Sheridan had a marvellous power of assimilation. He extended a ready welcome to all floating seeds of thought; and in his fertile brain they would speedily spring up, bringing forth the best they could. But to evolve from the petty discomfiture of Square the almost unequalled effect of the screen-scene — to see in the one the germs of the other — were a task worthy even of Sheridan's quick eye. The indebtedness to Molière is even less than to Fielding. We may put on one side Sheridan's ignorance of French — for in Colley Cibber's 'Non-Juror,' or in Bickerstaff's 'Hypocrite,' he could find Molière's Tartuffe; and the scandal-loving Celimène of the 'Misanthrope,' he might trace in Wycherley's 'Plain-Dealer.' If Sheridan had borrowed from Molière he was only following in the footsteps of his father, whose sole play, 'Captain O'Blunder,' is based on 'Monsieur de Pourceaugnac.' But Sheridan's indebtedness to Molière is barely visible. It is almost as slight, indeed, as the borrowing from the 'School for Scandal' of which Madame de Girardin was guilty for her fine comedy, 'Lady Tartuffe.' In any case, Sheridan's indebtedness is less to the 'Misanthrope' than to 'Tartuffe' — and even here there is little resemblance beyond the generic likeness of all hypocrites. This resemblance, such as it is, the French adapters of the 'School for Scandal' chose to emphasize by calling their version the 'Tartuffe des Mœurs.'

Although Sheridan was in general original in incident, he unhesitatingly made use of any happy phrases or effective locutions which struck his fancy in the course of his readings. He willingly distilled the perfume from a predecessor's flower; and it was with pleasure that he cut and set the gem which an earlier writer may have brought to light. Witty himself, he could boldly conquer and annex the wit of others, sure to increase its value by his orderly government. This can perhaps be justified on the ground that the rich can borrow with impunity; or, deeming wit his patrimony, Sheridan may have felt that, taking it, he was but come into his own again; as Molière said, "I take my own where I find it." In the preface to the *'Rivals,'* however, Sheridan has chosen to meet the charge of plagiarism. "Faded ideas," he said, "float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams, and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted." It is a curious coincidence that this very passage is quoted by Burgoyne to explain his accidental adoption, in the *'Heiress,'* of an image of Ariosto's and Rousseau's, which Byron did not scruple to use again in his monody on Sheridan himself:—

"Sighing that Nature formed but one such man,
And broke the die — in moulding Sheridan."

In the *'School for Scandal'* the construction, the ordering of the scenes, the development of the elaborate plot, is much better than in the comedies of any of Sheridan's contemporaries. A play in those days need not reveal a complete and self-contained plot. Great laxity of episode was not only permitted, but almost praised; and that Sheridan, with a sub-

ject which lent itself so readily to digression, should have limited himself as he did, shows his exact appreciation of the source of dramatic effect. But it must be confessed that the construction of the 'School for Scandal,' when measured by our modern standards, seems a little loose — a little diffuse, perhaps. It shows the welding of the two distinct plots. There can hardly be seen in it the ruling of a dominant idea, subordinating all the parts to the effect of the whole. But, although the two original motives have been united mechanically, although they have not flowed and fused together in the hot spurt of homogeneous inspiration, the joining has been so carefully concealed, and the whole structure has been overlaid with so much wit, that few people after seeing the play would care to complain. The wit is ceaseless; and wit like Sheridan's would cover sins of construction far greater than those of the 'School for Scandal.' It is "steeped in the very brine of conceit, and sparkles like salt in the fire."

In his conception of character Sheridan was a wit rather than a humorist. He created character by a distinctly intellectual process; he did not bring it forth out of the depths, as it were, of his own being. His humour—fine and dry as it was—was the humour of the wit. He had little or none of the rich and juicy, nay, almost oily humour of Falstaff, for instance. His wit was the wit of common-sense, like Jerrold's or Sydney Smith's; it was not wit informed with imagination, like Shakspeare's wit. But this is only to say again that Sheridan was not one of the few world-wide and all-embracing geniuses. He was one of those almost equally few who in their own line, limited though it may be, are unsurpassed. It has

been said that poets — among whom dramatists are entitled to stand — may be divided into three classes : those who can say one thing in one way — these are the great majority ; those who can say one thing in many ways — even these are not so many as they would be reckoned generally ; and those who can say many things in many ways — these are the chosen few, the scant half-dozen who hold the higher peak of Parnassus. In the front rank of the second class stood Sheridan. The one thing he had was wit — and of this in all its forms he was master. His wit in general had a metallic smartness and a crystalline coldness ; it rarely lifts us from the real to the ideal ; and yet the whole comedy is in one sense, at least, idealized ; it bears, in fact, the resemblance to real life that a well-cut diamond has to a drop of water.

Yet, the play is not wholly cold. Sheridan's wit could be genial as well as icy — of which there could be no better proof than the success with which he has enlisted our sympathies for the characters of his comedy. Sir Peter Teazle is an old fool, who has married a young wife ; but we are all glad when we see a prospect of his future happiness. Lady Teazle is flighty and foolish ; and yet we cannot help but like her. Charles we all wish well ; and as for Joseph, we feel from the first so sure of his ultimate discomfiture, that we are ready to let him off with the light punishment of exposure. There are, it is true, here and there blemishes to be detected on the general surface, an occasional hardness of feeling, an apparent lack, at times, of taste and delicacy — for instance, the bloodthirsty way in which the scandal-mongers pounce upon their prey, the almost brutal expression by Lady Teazle of her willingness to be a

widow, the ironical speech of Charles after the fall of the screen ; but these are more the fault of the age than of the author.

The great defect of the ' School for Scandal ' — the one thing which shows the difference between a comic writer of the type of Sheridan and a great dramatist like Shakspeare — is the unvarying wit of the characters. And not only are the characters all witty, but they all talk alike. Their wit is Sheridan's wit, which is very good wit indeed ; but it is Sheridan's own, and not Sir Peter Teazle's, or Backbite's, or Careless's, or Lady Sneerwell's. It is one man in his time playing many parts. It is the one voice always ; though the hands be the hands of Esau, the voice is the voice of Jacob. And this quick wit and ready repartee is not confined to the ladies and gentlemen ; the master is no better off than the man, and Careless airs the same wit as Charles. As Sheridan said in the ' Critic,' he was " not for making slavish distinctions in a free country, and giving all the fine language to the upper sort of people." It is a fact that the characters all talk too well ; the comedy would be far less entertaining if they did not. The stage is not life, and it is not meant to be ; a mere transcript of ordinary talk would be insufferable. Condensation is necessary ; and selection also, and a heightening and brightening of talk. No doubt Sheridan pushed this license to its utmost limit, — at times even beyond it ; but in consequence his comedy, if a little less artistic in the reading, is far more lively in the acting. It has been said that in Shakspeare we find not the language we would use in the situations, but the language we should wish to use — that we should talk so if we could. We cannot all of us be as witty as the characters of the

‘School for Scandal,’ but who of us would not if he could?

Wit of this kind is not to be had without labour. Because Sheridan sometimes borrowed, it does not follow that he was incapable of originating; or, because he always prepared when possible, that he was incapable of impromptu. But he believed in doing his best on all occasions. If caught unawares, his natural wit was ready; if, however, he had time for preparation, he spared no pains. He grudged no labour. He was willing to heat and hammer again and again—to file, and polish, and adjust, and oil, until the delicate machinery ran smoothly, and to the satisfaction even of his fastidious eye. Even in his early youth Sheridan had the faculty of toiling over his work to his immediate improvement; his friend Halhed complimented him on this in a letter written in 1770. As Sheridan himself said in two lines of ‘Clio’s Protest,’ published in 1770—a couplet often credited to Rogers—

“You write with ease, to show your breeding,
But easy writing’s curst hard reading.”

The ‘School for Scandal’ was not easy writing then, and it is not hard reading now. Not content with a wealth of wit alone—for he did not hold with the old maxim which says that jests, like salt, should be used sparingly; he salted with a lavish hand, and his plays have perhaps been preserved to us by this Attic salt—he sought the utmost refinement of language. An accomplished speaker himself, he smoothed every sentence till it ran trippingly on the tongue. His dialogue is easy to speak as his songs are easy to sing. To add in any way to the lustre and brilliance of the slightest sentence of the ‘School

for *Scandal*, to burnish a bit of dialogue, or brighten a soliloquy, could never cost Sheridan, lazy though he was, too much labour. "This kind of writing," as M. Taine says, "artificial and condensed as the satires of La Bruyère, is like a cut vial, into which the author has distilled, without reservation, all his reflections, his reading, his understanding." That this is true of Sheridan is obvious. In the '*School for Scandal*' he has done the best he could; he put into it all he had in him; it is the complete expression of his genius; beyond it he could not go.

After its first great success, the '*School for Scandal*' was not long in crossing to America; and its usual luck followed it to these shores. Ireland, in his admirable '*Records of the New York Stage*,' which it is always a duty and a pleasure to praise, noted what was probably its first performance in New York, on the evening of December 16, 1785, and on this occasion the comedy was cast to the full strength of the best company which had been then seen in America. Its success was instant and emphatic; and from that day to this it has never ceased to hold a first place among acting plays. It became at once the standard by which other successful plays were to be measured. Comedies were announced as "equal to the '*School for Scandal*,' or to any play of the century, the '*School for Scandal*' not excepted." This sort of "odorous comparison" continued to obtain for many years, and when some indiscreet admirer likened Mrs. Mowatt's '*Fashion*' to Sheridan's comedy, Poe took occasion to point out that the general tone of '*Fashion*' was adopted from the '*School for Scandal*,' to which, however, it bore, he said, just such affinity as the shell of the locust to the locust that tenants it, "as the spectrum of a Congreve

rocket to the Congreve rocket itself." It does not, however, need a cruel critic to show us how unfair it was to compare Mrs. Mowatt's pretty but pretentious play with the Congreve rockets and the Congreve wit of Sheridan's masterpiece. That the 'School for Scandal' was the favourite play of Washington, who was fond of the theatre, has been recorded by Mrs. Whitelock (the sister of Sarah Siddons and of John Kemble, and for a time the leading tragic actress of America). And in one point in particular are these last-century performances in this country of especial interest to the student of American dramatic literature. On April 16, 1786, was first acted in this city the 'Contrast,' a comedy in five acts, by Royal Tyler, afterward Chief Justice of Vermont. It was the first American play performed on the public stage by professional comedians. It contained in Jonathan, acted by Wignell, the first of stage Yankees, and the precursor, therefore, of Asa Trenchard, Colonel Mulberry Sellers, and Judge Bardwell Slote. Perhaps a short extract from the play, which was published in 1790, will show its connection with the 'School for Scandal.' Jonathan, green and innocent, and holding the theatre to be the "devil's drawing room," gets into it, however, in the belief that he is going to see a conjurer:—

Jenny. Did you see the man with his tricks?

Jonathan. Why, I vow, as I was looking out for him, they lifted up a great green cloth and let us look right into the next neighbour's house. Have you a good many houses in New York made in that 'ere way?

Jenny. Not many. But did you see the family?

Jonathan. Yes, swamp it, I seed the family.

Jenny. Well, and how did you like them?

Jonathan. Well, I vow, they were pretty much like other families; there was a poor, good-natured curse of a husband, and a sad rantipole of a wife.

Jenny. But did you see no other folks ?

Jonathan. Yes ; there was one youngster, they called him Mr. Joseph ; he talked as sober and as pious as a minister ; but, like some ministers that I know, he was a sly tike in his heart, for all that ; he was going to ask a young woman to spark it with him, and — the Lord have mercy on my soul — she was another man's wife !

It was in America also that two of the most noteworthy incidents in the career of the 'School for Scandal' occurred. One took place during a visit to this country of Macready, who, early accustomed to enact the heavy villains of the stage, took a fancy to the part of Joseph, and, not finding it as prominent as he liked, sought to rectify this defect by boldly cutting down the other characters ; and thus with the excision of the scandal-scene, the picture-scene, and several other scenes, the 'School for Scandal,' reduced to three acts, was played as an afterpiece, with Macready, very imperfect in the words of the part, as Joseph, dressed in the black coat and trousers of the nineteenth century. It may be remembered that Macready's greater predecessor as the chief of English tragedians, John Philip Kemble, was also wont to act in the 'School for Scandal' ; but he chose to appear as the more jovial and younger of the Surfaces, and his performance of the careless hero was known as "Charles's Martyrdom."

The second noteworthy incident was the performance of the 'School for Scandal,' on the centenary of its first production, on May 8, 1877, at the Grand Opera House, Toronto, in the presence of the Governor General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, the great-grandson of the author.

In the same year that this memorable performance

took place in a former French province, Miss Genevieve Ward, an American actress, appeared as Lady Teazle in Paris in a French version; and the foremost of Parisian dramatic critics, Francisque Sarcey seized the opportunity for a most interesting appreciation of the play. He considered it one of the best of the second class, and, as in his view the first class would contain few plays but those of Shakspeare and Molière, this is high praise. He ranked the 'School for Scandal' with the 'Mariage de Figaro,' and instituted the comparison of Sheridan with Beaumarchais, which Taine had already attempted. But Sarcey held a more just as well as a more favourable opinion of the 'School for Scandal' than Taine. An earlier French critic, Villemain, who edited a close translation of the play for the series of foreign masterpieces, declared it to be one of the most amusing and most wittily-comic plays which can anywhere be seen, and he hit upon one of its undoubted merits when he pointed out that its "wit is so radically comic that it can be translated, which, as all know, is the most perilous trial for wit possible." Sarcey informed us that the 'School for Scandal' is now and has been for years, used as a text-book in French schools, and that he himself was taught to read English out of Sheridan's play. Such was also the opinion of M. Hégésippe Cler, who published a French translation of the 'School for Scandal' in 1879, with a preface, in which he declared that Sheridan's comedy was particularly French, nay, even Parisian, and that it is absolutely harmless and fitted exactly for use in teaching in schools for girls. Oddly enough this is the exact reverse of the opinion of the French critics of a century ago. In 1788 the auction and screen scenes

had been introduced into a little piece called the 'Deux Neveux'; a year later a translation in French by Delille, with the permission, apparently, of Sheridan himself, was published in London. Certain episodes were utilized in the 'Portraits de Famille,' the 'Deux Cousins' and 'Valsain et Florville'; and finally, in 1789, a version of the whole play by Pluteau was acted as 'L'Homme Sentimental'—but the subject was too risky, and the scenes were too broad for the fastidious taste of the Parisians. Even Grimm was shocked by it—and one would think it took much to shock Grimm. A second adaptation was produced at the Théâtre Français; it was called the 'Tartuffe des Mœurs.' A few years later, yet another version, 'L'École du Scandale,' by two melodramatic writers, Crosnier and Jouslin de la Salle, was acted at the Porte St.-Martin Theatre, with the pathetic Mme. Dorval as Milady Tizlé. Oddly enough it was Mme. Dorval's husband, Merle, who was the cause of the first performance in France of the 'School for Scandal' in English by English actors. Merle was one of the managers of the Port St.-Martin Theatre in 1822; and he arranged for a series of performances by the company of the Brighton Theatre, then managed by Mr. Penley. The British comedians opened their season with 'Othello'; but it was only seven years after Waterloo, and Shakspeare was stormily received. For the second performance Sheridan took Shakspeare's place, and the 'School for Scandal' was announced for Friday, August 2, 1822. But the day was unlucky, and the mob which took possession of the theatre would not allow the English comedy to be acted at all. It is interesting to note the change which took place in France in the short space of five

years. In 1827, when the Covent Garden company appeared at the Odéon Theatre, they met with a cordial welcome; and they began their season with Sheridan's other comedy, the 'Rivals.'

The Germans were not behind the French in the enjoyment of the 'School for Scandal.' Shröder, the actor and author, went from Vienna to London — no small journey, in the eighteenth century — expressly for the purpose of seeing it acted. He understood English well, and attended every performance of the piece while he was in England. On his return to Vienna, he produced an adaptation — for it is such, and not a translation, though the spirit of the original is well preserved — which has held the German stage ever since. The texture of the 'School for Scandal,' its solidity of situation, its compact and easily comprehensible plot, and its ceaseless play of wit, — "a sort of El Dorado of wit," as Moore calls it, "where the precious metal is thrown about by all classes as carelessly as if they had not the least idea of its value," — these were all qualities sure to commend it to German audiences as to French. Macready records himself as having seen in Venice an Italian version of the play — that by Carpani, probably — which could hardly have followed the original as closely as was to be desired; but the strength of the situations and the contrast of the characters would always carry the piece through in any language and in spite of any alterations. There are translations of the 'School for Scandal' in many other languages. In 1877 it was acted with success in Dutch at the Hague; and in 1884 a Gujarati version, adapted to modern Parsee life by Mr. K. N. Kabrajee, was produced, also with success, at the Esplanade Theatre in Bombay.

THE SCHOOL FOR ŠCANDAL.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ,

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE,
MAY 8, 1777.

SIR PETER TEAZLE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. King.</i>
SIR OLIVER SURFACE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Yates.</i>
SIR HARRY BUMPER	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Gawdxy.</i>
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Dodd.</i>
JOSEPH SURFACE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Palmer.</i>
CHARLES SURFACE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Smith.</i>
CARELESS	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Farren.</i>
SNAKE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Packer.</i>
CRABTREE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Parsons.</i>
ROWLEY	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Aickin.</i>
MOSES	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Baddeley.</i>
TRIP	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mr. Lamash.</i>
LADY TEAZLE	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Mrs. Abington.</i>
LADY SNEERWELL	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Miss Sherry.</i>
MRS. CANDOUR	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Miss Pope.</i>
MARIA	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Miss P. Hopkiss.</i>

Gentlemen, Maid, and Servants.

SCENE — LONDON.

A PORTRAIT:

ADDRESSED TO MRS. CREWE, WITH THE COMEDY
OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

. BY R. B. SHERIDAN, ESQ.

TELL me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
Who rail by precept and detract by rule,
Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own,
That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise !
Attend ! — a model shall attract your view —
Daughters of calumny, I summon you !
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.
Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,
Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
A fix'd antipathy to young and fair ;
By cunning, cautious ; or by nature, cold,
In maiden madness, virulently bold ! —
Attend, ye skill'd to coin the precious tale.
Creating proof, where innuendoes fail !
Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
Omit no circumstance, except the fact ! —
Attend, all ye who boast, — or old or young, —
The living libel of a slanderous tongue !

So shall my theme as far contrasted be,
As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny.
Come, gentle Amoret (for 'neath that name
In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame);
Come — for but thee who seeks the muse? and while
Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
With timid grace, and hesitating eye,
The perfect model, which I boast, supply: —
Vain Muse! could'st thou the humblest sketch create
Of her, or slightest charm could'st imitate —
Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace
The faintest wonder of her form and face —
Poets would study the immortal line,
And *Reynolds* own his art subdued by thine,
That art, which well might added lustre give
To Nature's best, and Heaven's superlative:
On *Granby's* cheek might bid new glories rise,
Or point a purer beam from *Devon's* eyes!
Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays!
But praising Amoret we cannot err,
No tongue o'ervalues Heaven, or flatters her!
Yet she by fate's perverseness — she alone
Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her own.
Adorning fashion, unadorn'd by dress,
Simple from taste, and not from carelessness;
Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild:
No state has *Amoret*; no studied mien;
She frowns no *goddess*, and she moves no *queen*.
The softer charm that in her manner lies
Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise;
It justly suits the expression of her face, —
'T is less than dignity, and more than grace!
On her pure cheek the native hue is such,

That, form'd by Heaven to be admired so much,
The hand divine, with a less partial care,
Might well have fix'd a fainter crimson there,
And bade the gentle inmate of her breast —
Inshrined Modesty — supply the rest.
But who the peril of her lips shall paint?
Strip them of smiles — still, still all words are faint,
But moving Love himself appears to teach
Their action, though denied to rule her speech;
And thou who seest her speak, and dost not hear,
Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear;
Viewing those lips, thou still may'st make pretence
To judge of what she says, and swear 't is sense:
Clothed with such grace, with such expression
fraught,
They move in meaning, and they pause in thought!
But dost thou farther watch, with charm'd surprise,
The mild irresolution of her eyes,
Curious to mark how frequent they repose,
In brief eclipse and momentary close —
Ah! seest thou not an ambush'd Cupid there,
Too tim'rous of his charge, with jealous care
Veils and unveils those beams of heavenly light,
Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight?
Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.
What though her peaceful breast should ne'er allow
Subduing frowns to arm her alter'd brow,
By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,
More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!
Thus lovely, thus adorn'd, possessing all
Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
The height of vanity might well be thought
Prerogative in her, and Nature's fault.
Yet gentle *Amoret*, in mind supreme

As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme ;
And, half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
She bars with wit those darts too keen before : —
Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though *Greville*, or the *Muse*, should deign to teach,
Fond to improve, nor timorous to discern
How far it is a woman's grace to learn ;
In *Millar's* dialect she would not prove
Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love,
Graced by those signs which truth delights to own,
The timid blush, and mild submitted tone :
Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
Displays the tender hue of female doubt ;
Deck'd with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
How graceful *science*, when that robe she wears !
Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined :
A taste for mirth, by contemplation school'd,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,
A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide ;
An awe of talent, which she owns with pride !

Peace, idle Muse ! — no more thy strain prolong,
But yield a theme, thy warmest praises wrong ;
Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
Thy feeble verse, behold th' acknowledged praise
Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And cast a fatal gloom o'er Scandal's reign !
And lo ! each pallid hag, with blister'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung —
Owns all the colours just — the outline true,
Thee my inspirer, and my *model* — CREWE !

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK.

A SCHOOL for Scandal! tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now, the knowing think;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones — let them read the papers;
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit;
Crave what you will — there's *quantum sufficit*.
“Lord!” cries my Lady *Wormwood* (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just risen at noon, all night at cards when threshing
Strong tea and scandal — “Bless me, how refreshing!
Give me the papers, *Lisp* — how bold and free!

[*Sips*.]

Last night Lord L. [Sips] was-caught with Lady D.
For aching heads what charming *sal volatile*! [*Sips*.]
If Mrs. B. will still continue flirting,
We hope she'll DRAW or we'll UNDRAW the curtain.
Fine satire, poz — in public all abuse it,
But, by ourselves [*Sips*], our praise we can't refuse it.
Now, *Lisp*, read you — there, at that dash and star.”
“Yes, ma'am — *A certain lord had best beware.*
Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square;
For, should he Lady W. find willing,

Wormwood is bitter"—— "Oh! that's me! the villain!

Throw it behind the fire, and never more
Let that vile paper come within my door."
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.
Is our young bard so young, to think that he
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?
Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil's sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging:
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestow'd,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks this hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for you.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

A COMEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — LADY SNEERWELL'S *Dressing-room*.

LADY SNEERWELL *discovered at the dressing-table ;*
SNAKE *drinking chocolate.*

Lady Sneer. The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted ?

Snake. They were, madam ; and, as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

Lady Sneer. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall ?

Snake. That's in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackitt's ears within four-and-twenty hours ; and then, you know, the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneer. Why, truly, Mrs. Clackitt has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of industry.

Snake. True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge, she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three

sons being disinherited ; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements ; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a tête-à-tête in the "Town and Country Magazine," when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.

Lady Sneer. She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

Snake. 'T is very true. She generally designs well, has a free tongue and a bold invention ; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of tint, and mellowness of sneer, which distinguish your ladyship's scandal.

Lady Sneer. You are partial, Snake.

Snake. Not in the least ; everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

Lady Sneer. Yes, my dear Snake ; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself, in the early part of my life, by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own reputation.

Snake. Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you have lately employed me, wherein, I confess, I am at a loss to guess your motives.

Lady Sneer. I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbour, Sir Peter Teazle, and his family ?

Snake. I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their

father's death; the eldest possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of — the youngest, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character: the former an avowed admirer of your ladyship, and apparently your favourite; the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me, why you, the widow of a city knight, with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface; and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria.

Lady Sneer. Then, at once to unravel this mystery, I must inform you that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr. Surface and me.

Snake. No!

Lady Sneer. His real attachment is to Maria, or her fortune; but, finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions, and profit by my assistance.

Snake. Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success.

Lady Sneer. Heavens! how dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess that Charles — that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation — that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?

Snake. Now, indeed, your conduct appears consistent: but how came you and Mr. Surface so confidential?

Lady Sneer. For our mutual interest. [I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious—in short, a sentimental knave;] while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.

Snake. Yes; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England—and, above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

Lady Sneer. True; and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria; while poor Charles has no friend in the house—though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Surface.

Lady Sneer. Show him up. [*Exit SERVANT.*] He generally calls about this time. I don't wonder at people giving him to me for a lover.

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE.

Jos. Surf. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day? Mr. Snake, your most obedient.

Lady Sneer. Snake has just been rallying me on our mutual attachment; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us; and, believe me, the confidence is not ill placed.

Jos. Surf. Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and discernment.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, no compliments now; but

tell me when you saw your mistress, Maria Alice. what is more material to me, your brother.

Jos. Surf. I have not seen either since I left you ; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

Lady Sneer. Ah, my dear Snake ! the merit of this belongs to you. But do your brother's distresses increase ?

Jos. Surf. Every hour. I am told he has had another execution in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.

Lady Sneer. Poor Charles !

Jos. Surf. True, madam ; notwithstanding his vices, one can't help feeling for him. Poor Charles ! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of any essential service to him ; for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves ——

Lady Sneer. O Lud ! you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends.

Jos. Surf. Egad, that's true ! I'll keep that sentiment till I see Sir Peter. However, it is certainly a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

Snake. I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming ; I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you. Mr. Surface, your most obedient.

Jos. Surf. Sir, your very devoted. — [*Exit SNAKE.*] Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any farther confidence in that fellow.

Lady Sneer. Why so ?

Jos. Surf. I have lately detected him in frequent

Lady Sneer with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

Lady Sneer. And do you think he would betray us?

Jos. Surf. Nothing more likely: take my word for't, Lady Sneerwell, that fellow has n't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy. — Ah, Maria!

Enter MARIA.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my dear, how do you do? — What's the matter?

Mar. Oh! there's that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, has just called at my guardian's, with his odious uncle, Crabtree; so I slipped out, and ran hither to avoid them.

Lady Sneer. Is that all?

Jos. Surf. If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

Lady Sneer. Nay, now you are severe; for I dare swear the truth of the matter is, Maria heard *you* were here. But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done, that you should avoid him so?

Mar. Oh, he has done nothing — but 't is for what he has said: [his conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance]

Jos. Surf. Ay, and the worst of it is, there is no advantage in not knowing him; for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend: and his uncle's as bad.

Lady Sneer. Nay, but we should make allowance; Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

Mar. For my part. I own, madam, wit loses its

respect with me, when I see it in company with malice. What do you think, Mr. Surface?

Jos. Surf. Certainly, madam; to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

Lady Sneer. Psha! there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill nature: the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick. What's your opinion, Mr. Surface?

Jos. Surf. To be sure, madam: that conversation, where the spirit of raillery is suppressed, will ever appear tedious and insipid.

Mar. Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalry, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other: but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one.

Reënter SERVANT.

Serv. Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and, if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage.

Lady Sneer. Beg her to walk in. — [*Exit SERVANT.*] Now, Maria, here is a character to your taste; for, though Mrs. Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best-natured and best sort of woman.

Mar. Yes, — [with a very gross affectation of good-nature and benevolence, she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree]

Jos. Surf. I' faith that's true, Lady Sneerwell: whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence.

Lady Sneer. Hush! — here she is! —

Enter MRS. CANDOUR.

Mrs. Can. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this century? — Mr. Surface, what news do you hear? — though indeed it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

Jos. Surf. Just so, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Oh, Maria! child, — what, is the whole affair off between you and Charles? — His extravagance, I presume — the town talks of nothing else.

Mar. I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

Mrs. Can. True, true, child: but there's no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it, as I indeed was to learn, from the same quarter, that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately as well as could be wished.

Mar. 'T is strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

Mrs. Can. Very true, child: but what's to be done? People will talk — there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt. But, Lord! there's no minding what one hears; though, to be sure, I had this from very good authority.

Mar. Such reports are highly scandalous.

Mrs. Can. So they are, child — shameful, shameful! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes. — Lord, now who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion? Yet such is the ill nature of people, that they say her uncle stopped her last week, just as she was stepping into the York diligence with her dancing-master.

Mar. I'll answer for 't there are no grounds for that report.

Mrs. Can. Ah, no foundation in the world, I dare swear: no more, probably, than for the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino — though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.

Jos. Surf. The license of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

Mar. 'T is so; but, in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.

Mrs. Can. To be sure they are; tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers — 't is an old observation, and a very true one: but what's to be done, as I said before? how will you prevent people from talking? To-day, Mrs. Clackitt assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife, like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted that a certain widow, in the next street, had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed that Lord Buffalo had discovered his lady at a house of no extraordinary fame; and that Sir Harry Bouquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar provocation. — But, Lord, do you think I would report these things? — No, no! tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as the tale-makers.

Jos. Surf. Ah! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good nature!

Mrs. Can. I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintance, I own, I always love to think the best. — By the by, I hope 't is not true that your brother is absolutely ruined?

Jos. Surf. I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Ah! I heard so — but you must tell him, to keep up his spirits; everybody, almost is in the same way; Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit — all up; I hear, within this week; so, if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintance ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

Jos. Surf. Doubtless, ma'am — a very great one.

Reënter SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[*Exit SERVANT.*

Lady Sneer. So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you: positively you sha'n't escape.

Enter CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE.

Crab. Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand. Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite? Egad, ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet, too. Is n't he, Lady Sneerwell?

Sir. Benj. Oh, fie, uncle!

Crab. Nay, egad it's true; I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom. — Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire? — Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's conversazione. Come, now; your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and —

Sir Benj. Uncle, now — pr'ythee —

Crab. I' faith, ma'am, 't would surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these fine sort of things.

Lady Sneer. I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

Sir Benj. To say truth, ma'am, 't is very vulgar to print : and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. — However, I have some love elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give the public. [*Pointing to MARIA.*]

Crab. [*To MARIA.*] 'Fore heaven, ma'am, they 'll immortalize you! — you will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

Sir Benj. [*To MARIA.*] Yes, madam, I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall meander through a meadow of margin. — 'Fore Gad they will be the most elegant things of their kind !

Crab. But, ladies, that 's true — have you heard the news ?

Mrs. Can. What, sir, do you mean the report of

Crab. No, ma'am, that 's not it. — Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

Mrs. Can. Impossible.

Crab. Ask Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. 'T is very true, ma'am : everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoke.

Crab. Yes — and they do say there were pressing reasons for it.

Lady Sneer. Why, I have heard something of this before.

Mrs. Can. It can't be — and I wonder any one should believe such a story of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

Sir Benj. O Lud ! ma'am, that 's the very reason 't was believed at once. She has always been so

cautious and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

Mrs. Can. Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp as a fever is generally to those of the strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of puny, sickly reputation, that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robuster characters of a hundred prudes.

Sir Benj. True, madam, there are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution, who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply their want of stamina by care and circumspection.

Mrs. Can. Well, but this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.

Crab. That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am. Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her lover and her character last summer at Tunbridge? — Sir Benjamin, you remember it?

Sir. Benj. Oh, to be sure! — the most whimsical circumstance.

Lady Sneer. How was it, pray?

Crab. Why, one evening, at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a young lady in company, I have known instances of it; for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins. — "What!" cries the Lady Dowager Dundizy (who you know is as deaf as a post), "has Miss Piper had twins?" — This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughter. However, 't was the next morning everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Miss

Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl: and in less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farmhouse where the babies were put to nurse.

Lady Sneer. Strange, indeed!

Crab. Matter of fact, I assure you. O Lud! Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home?

Jos. Surf. Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

Crab. He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe? — Sad comfort, whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on!

Jos. Surf. Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform.

Sir Benj. To be sure he may: for my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say; and, though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of by the Jews.

Crab. That's true, egad, nephew. If the Old Jewry was a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman: no man more popular there, 'fore Gad! I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine; and that, whenever he is sick, they have prayers for the recovery of his health in all the synagogues.

Sir Benj. Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities; have a score of tradesmen waiting in the ante-chamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.

Jos. Surf. This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen, but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother.

Mar. [*Aside.*] Their malice is intolerable! —

[*Aloud.*] Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning: I 'm not very well. [*Exit* MARIA.]

Mrs. Can. O dear! she changes colour very much.

Lady Sneer. Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her: she may want your assistance.

Mrs. Can. That I will, with all my soul, ma'am.—
Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be! [*Exit* MRS. CANDOUR.]

Lady Sneer. 'T was nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstanding their difference.

Sir Benj. The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.

Crab. But Benjamin, you must not give up the pursuit for that: follow her, and put her into good humour. Repeat her some of your own verses. Come, I'll assist you.

Sir Benj. Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you; but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.

Crab. O Lud, ay! undone as ever man was — can't raise a guinea! —

Sir Benj. And everything sold, I'm told, that was movable. —

Crab. I have seen one that was at his house. — Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which I believe are framed in the wainscots —

Sir Benj. And I'm very sorry also to hear some bad stories against him. [*Going.*]

Crab. Oh, he has done many mean things, that's certain.

Sir Benj. But, however, as he's your brother —

Crab. We'll tell you all another opportunity. [*Going.*]

[*Exeunt* CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN.]

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! 'tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

Jos. Surf. And I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your ladyship than Maria.

Lady Sneer. I doubt her affections are farther engaged than we imagine. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing farther; in the meantime I 'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiment. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House.*

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE.

Sir Peter. When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect? 'T is now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since! We tifted a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution—a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet she now plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she never had seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours; yet the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or

I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter ROWLEY.

Row. Oh! Sir Peter, your servant: how is it with you, sir?

Sir Peter. Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

Row. What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

Sir Peter. A good question to a married man!

Row. Nay, I'm sure, Sir Peter, your lady can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

Sir Peter. Why, has anybody told you she was dead?

Row. Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her, notwithstanding your tempers don't exactly agree.

Sir Peter. But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am, myself, the sweetest-tempered man alive, and hate a teasing temper; and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

Row. Indeed!

Sir Peter. Ay; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong! But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition. — Then, to complete my vexation, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power of a father over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband; meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

Row. You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be

deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles, my life on 't! he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was, at his years, nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss.

Sir Peter. You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Sir Oliver's liberality gave them an early independence: of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. [Joseph is indeed a model of the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the *sentiments* he professes] but, for the other, take my word for 't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah! my old friend, Sir Oliver, will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

Row. I am sorry to find you so violent against the young man, because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news that will surprise you.

Sir Peter. What! let me hear.

Row. Sir Oliver *is* arrived, and at this moment in town.

Sir Peter. How! you astonish me! I thought you did not expect him this month.

Row. I did not; but his passage has been remarkably quick.

Sir Peter. Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend. 'T is fifteen years since we met. — We have had many a day together: — but does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival?

Row. Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their dispositions.

Sir Peter. Ah! there needs no art to discover their merits — however he shall have his way; but, pray, does he know I am married?

Row. Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

Sir Peter. What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption! Ah! Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, but he has been steady to his text. — Well, he must be soon at my house, though — I'll instantly give orders for his reception. — But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

Row. By no means.

Sir Peter. For I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes; so I'll have him think, Lord forgive me! that we are a very happy couple.

Row. I understand you: — but then you must be very careful not to differ while he is in the house with you.

Sir Peter. Egad, and so we must — and that's impossible. Ah! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves — no — the crime carries its punishment along with it.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House.**Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE.*

Sir Peter. Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

Lady Teaz. Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will too. What! though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

Sir Peter. Very well, ma'am, very well;—so a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

Lady Teaz. Authority! No, to be sure:—if you want authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me: I am sure you were old enough.

Sir Peter. Old enough!—ay, there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance!

Lady Teaz. My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

Sir Peter. No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with

flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give a *fête champêtre* at Christmas.

Lady Teaz. And am I to blame, Sir Peter, because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses grew under our feet!

Sir Peter. Oons! madam — if you had been born to this, I should n't wonder at your talking thus; but you forget what your situation was when I married you.

Lady Teaz. No, no, I don't; 't was a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

Sir Peter. Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat a humbler style — the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side, your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

Lady Teaz. Oh, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led. — My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt book, and comb my aunt Deborah's lapdog.

Sir Peter. Yes, yes, ma'am, 't was so indeed.

Lady Teaz. And then you know, my evening amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not materials to make up; to play Pope Joan with the curate; to read a sermon to my aunt; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

Sir Peter. I am glad you have so good a memory.

Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from ; but now you must have your coach — *vis-à-vis* — and three powdered footmen before your chair ; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, on a docked coach-horse.

Lady Teaz. No — I swear I never did that: I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

Sir Peter. This, madam, was your situation ; and what have I done for you ? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank — in short, I have made you my wife.

Lady Teaz. Well, then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, that is —

Sir Peter. My widow, I suppose ?

Lady Teaz. Hem ! hem !

Sir Peter. I thank you, madam — but don't flatter yourself ; for, though your ill conduct may disturb my peace of mind, it shall never break my heart, I promise you : however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

Lady Teaz. Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense ?

Sir Peter. 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these little elegant expenses when you married me ?

Lady Teaz. Lud, Sir Peter ! would you have me be out of the fashion ?

Sir Peter. The fashion, indeed ! what had you to do with the fashion before you married me ?

Lady Teaz. For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

Sir Peter. Ay — there again — taste ! Zounds ! madam, you had no taste when you married me !

Lady Teaz. That 's very true, indeed, Sir Peter ! and after having married you, I should never pretend to taste again, I allow. But now, Sir Peter, since we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's.

Sir Peter. Ay, there 's another precious circumstance — a charming set of acquaintance you have made there !

Lady Teaz. Nay, Sir Peter, they are all people of rank and fortune, and remarkable tenacious of reputation.

Sir Peter. Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance ; for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves ! Such a crew ! Ah ! many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation.

Lady Teaz. What, would you restrain the freedom of speech ?

Sir Peter. Ah ! they have made you just as bad as any one of the society.

Lady Teaz. Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace.

Sir Peter. Grace indeed !

Lady Teaz. [But I vow I bear no malice against the people I abuse.] — When I say an ill-natured thing, 't is out of pure good humour ; and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

Sir Peter. Well, well, I'll call in, just to look after my own character.

Lady Teaz. Then, indeed, you must make haste after me, or you 'll be too late. So good-by to ye.

[*Exit* LADY TEAZLE.]

Sir Peter. So—I have gained much by my intended expostulation! Yet with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt for my authority! Well, though I can't make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her; [and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me.] [*Exit.*]

SCENE II. — *A Room in* LADY SNEERWELL'S *House.*

LADY SNEERWELL, MRS. CANDOUR, CRABTREE, SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE, and JOSEPH SURFACE, *discovered.*

Lady Sneer. Nay, positively, we will hear it.

Jos. Surf. Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

Sir Benj. O plague on 't, uncle! 'tis mere nonsense.

Crab. No, no; 'fore Gad, very clever for an extempore!

Sir Benj. But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance. You must know that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricule was taking the dust in Hyde Park, in a sort of duodecimo phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies; upon which, I took out my pocket-book, and in one moment produced the following:—

Sure never was seen two such beautiful ponies;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies:
To give them this title I'm sure can't be wrong,
Their legs are so slim and their tails are so long.

Crab. There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip, and on horseback too.

Jos. Surf. [A very Phœbus, mounted] — indeed, Sir Benjamin!

Sir Benj. Oh dear, sir! trifles — trifles.

Enter LADY TEAZLE and MARIA.

Mrs. Can. I must have a copy.

Lady Sneer. Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter?

Lady Teaz. I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down to piquet with Mr. Surface.

Mar. I take very little pleasure in cards — however, I'll do as your ladyship pleases.

Lady Teaz. I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her; I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me before Sir Peter came. [Aside.

Mrs. Can. Now, I'll die; but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

Lady Teaz. What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

Mrs. Can. They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermillion to be handsome.

Lady Sneer. Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.

Crab. I am very glad you think so, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. She has a charming fresh colour.

Lady Teaz. Yes, when it is fresh put on.

Mrs. Can. O, fie! I'll swear her colour is natural: I have seen it come and go!

Lady Teaz. I dare swear you have, ma'am: it goes off at night, and comes again in the morning.

Sir Benj. True, ma'am, it not only comes and

goes ; but, what's more, egad, her maid can fetch and carry it !

Mrs. Can. Ha ! ha ! ha ! how I hate to hear you talk so ! But surely, now, her sister *is*, or *was*, very handsome.

Crab. Who ? Mrs. Evergreen ? O Lord ! she's six-and-fifty if she's an hour !

Mrs. Can. Now positively you wrong her ; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost — and I don't think she looks more.

Sir Benj. Ah ! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, if Mrs. Evergreen *does* take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity ; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre caulks her wrinkles.

Sir Benj. Nay, now ; Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, 't is not that she paints so ill — but, when she has finished her face, she joins it on so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur may see at once that the head is modern, though the trunk's antique.

Crab. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well said, nephew.

Mrs. Can. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well, you make me laugh ; but I vow I hate you for it. — What do you think of Miss Simper ?

Sir Benj. Why, she has very pretty teeth.

Lady Teaz. Yes ; and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a-jar, as it were — thus.

[*Shows her teeth.*]

Mrs. Can. How can you be so ill-natured ?

Lady Teaz. Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's-box, and all her words appear to slide out edgewise, as it were—thus: *How do you do, madam? Yes, madam.* [*Mimics.*

Lady Sneer. Very well, Lady Teazle; I see you can be a little severe.

Lady Teaz. In defence of a friend it is but justice.—But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry.

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE.

Sir Peter. Ladies, your most obedient.—[*Aside.*] Mercy on me, here is the whole set! a character dead at every word, I suppose.

Mrs. Can. I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious—and Lady Teazle as bad as any one.

Sir Peter. That must be very distressing to *you*, indeed, Mrs. Candour.

Mrs. Can. Oh, they will allow good qualities to nobody; not even good nature to our friend, Mrs. Pursy.

Lady Teaz. What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille's last night?

Mrs. Can. Nay, her bulk is her misfortune; and, when she takes so much pains to get rid of it, you ought not to reflect on her.

Lady Sneer. That's very true, indeed.

Lady Teaz. Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey; laces herself by pulleys; and often, in the hottest noon in summer, you may see her on a little squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind

like a drummer's and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

Mrs. Can. I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

Sir Peter. Yes, a good defence, truly.

Mrs. Can. Truly, Lady Teazle is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

Crab. Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious — an awkward gawky, without any one good point under heaven.

Mrs. Can. Positively you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine by marriage, and, as for her person, great allowance is to be made; for, let me tell you, a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl of six-and-thirty.

Lady Sneer. Though, surely, she is handsome still — and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, it is not to be wondered at.

Mrs. Can. True, and then as to her manner; upon my word, I think it is particularly graceful, considering she never had the least education: for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner, and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.

Sir Benj. Ah! you are both of you too good-natured!

Sir Peter. Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! mercy on me!

Mrs. Can. [For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill spoken of. *[Aside.]*

Sir Peter. No, to be sure!

Sir Benj. Oh! you are of a moral turn. Mrs. Candour and I can sit for an hour and hear Lady Stucco talk sentiment.

Lady Teaz. Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the dessert after dinner; for she's just like the French fruit one cracks for mottoes — made up of paint and proverb.

Mrs. Can. Well, I will never join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical on beauty.

Crab. Oh, to be sure! she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen; 't is a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

Sir Benj. So she has, indeed — an Irish front —

Crab. Caledonian locks —

Sir Benj. Dutch nose —

Crab. Austrian lips —

Sir Benj. Complexion of a Spaniard —

Crab. And teeth *à la Chinoise* —

Sir Benj. In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa — where no two guests are of a nation

Crab. Or a congress at the close of a general war — wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter. Mercy on my life! — a person they dine with twice a week! [Aside.

Lady Sneer. Go, go; you are a couple of provoking toads.

Mrs. Can. Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so — for give me leave to say that Mrs. Ogle —

Sir Peter. Madam, madam, I beg your pardon — there's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues.

But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you 'll not take her part.

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! ha! well said, Sir Peter! but you are a cruel creature — too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

Sir Peter. Ah, madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good-nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady Teaz. True, Sir Peter: I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

Sir Benj. Or rather, madam, suppose them man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

Lady Teaz. But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal, I believe he would have it put down by parliament.

Sir Peter. 'Fore heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an act for the preservation of fame, as well as game, I believe many would thank them for the bill.

Lady Sneer. O Lud! Sir Peter; would you deprive us of our privileges?

Sir Peter. Ay, madam, and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

Lady Sneer. Go, you monster!

Mrs. Can. But, surely, you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear?

Sir Peter. Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured party should have a right to come on any of the indorsers.

Crab. Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

Sir Peter. Oh, nine out of ten of the malicious inventions are founded on some ridiculous misrepresentation.

Lady Sneer. Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room?

Enter SERVANT, who whispers SIR PETER.

Sir Peter. I'll be with them directly. — [*Exit SERVANT.*] I'll get away unperceived. [*Aside.*

Lady Sneer. Sir Peter, you are not going to leave us?

Sir Peter. Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me. [*Exit SIR PETER.*

Sir Benj. Well — certainly; Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a strange being: I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he were not your husband.

Lady Teaz. Oh, pray don't mind that; come, do let's hear them.

[*Exeunt all but JOSEPH SURFACE and MARIA.*

Jos. Surf. Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

Mar. How is it possible I should? — If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities or misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humour, Heaven grant me a double portion of dulness!

Jos. Surf. Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are; they have no malice at heart.

Mar. Then is their conduct still more contemptible; for, in my opinion, nothing could excuse the

intemperance of their tongues but a natural and uncontrollable bitterness of mind.

Jos. Surf. Undoubtedly, madam ; and it has always been a sentiment of mine, that to propagate a malicious truth wantonly is more despicable than to falsify from revenge. But can you, Maria, feel thus for others, and be unkind to me alone ? Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion ?

Mar. Why will you distress me by renewing this subject ?

Jos. Surf. Ah, Maria ! you would not treat me thus, and oppose your guardian, St. Peter's will, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival !

Mar. Ungenerously urged ! But, whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up, because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

Jos. Surf. Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown : by all that 's honest, I swear — [*Kneels.*

Reënter LADY TEAZLE behind.

[*Aside.*] Gad's life, here 's Lady Teazle. — [*Aloud to MARIA.*] You must not — no, you shall not — for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle —

Mar. Lady Teazle !

Jos. Surf. Yet were Sir Peter to suspect —

Lady Teaz. [*Coming forward.*] What is this, pray ? Does he take her for me ? — Child, you are wanted in the next room. — [*Exit MARIA.*] What is all this, pray ?

Jos. Surf. Oh, the most unlucky circumstance in nature ! Maria has somehow suspected the tender

concern I have for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavouring to reason with her when you came in.

Lady Teaz. Indeed ! but you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning — do you usually argue on your knees ?

Jos. Surf. Oh, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast — But, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised ?

Lady Teaz. No, no ; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion requires.

Jos. Surf. True — a mere Platonic cicisbeo, — what every wife is entitled to.

Lady Teaz. Certainly, one must not be out of the fashion. — However, I have so many of my country prejudices left, that, though Sir Peter's ill-humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to —

Jos. Surf. The only revenge in your power. — Well, I applaud your moderation.

Lady Teaz. Go — you are an insinuating wretch ! But we shall be missed — let us join the company.

Jos. Surf. But we had best not return together.

Lady Teaz. Well, don't stay ; for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you.

[*Exit.*

Jos. Surf. A curious dilemma, truly, my politics have run me into ! I wanted, at first, only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle, that she might not be my enemy with Maria ; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover. Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many

cursed rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last. [Exit.

SCENE III. — *A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House.*

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY.

Sir Oliv. Ha! ha! ha! so my old friend is married, hey? — a young wife out of the country. Ha! ha! ha! that he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long, and sink into a husband at last!

Row. But you must not rally him on the subject, Sir Oliver; 't is a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

Sir Oliv. Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance! — Poor Peter! But you say he has entirely given up Charles — never sees him, hey?

Row. His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has industriously been led into by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill name. Whereas, the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them, his brother is the favourite.

Sir Oliv. Ay, I know there is a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time, and will rob a young fellow of his good name before he has years to know the value of it. — But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you! — No, no; if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

Row. Then, my life on 't, you will reclaim him. — Ah, sir, it gives me new life to find that your heart is

not turned against him, and that the son of my good old master has one friend, however, left.

Sir Oliv. What! shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself? Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was?

Row. Sir, 't is this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family. — But here comes Sir Peter!

Sir Oliv. Egad, so he does! Mercy on me! he's greatly altered, and seems to have a settled married look! One may read *husband* in his face at this distance!

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE.

Sir Peter. Ha! Sir Oliver — my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

Sir Oliv. Thank you, thank you, Sir Peter! and i' faith I am glad to find you well, believe me!

Sir Peter. Oh! 't is a long time since we met — fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.

Sir Oliv. Ay, I have had my share. But, what! I find you are married, hey, my old boy? Well, well, it can't be helped; and so — I wish you joy with all my heart!

Sir Peter. Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver, — Yes, I have entered into — the happy state; — but we'll not talk of that now.

Sir Oliv. True, true, Sir Peter; old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting. No, no —

Row. [*Aside to* SIR OLIVER.] Take care, pray, sir. —

Sir Oliv. Well, so one of my nephews is a wild rogue, hey?

Sir Peter. Wild! Ah! my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there; he's a lost young man, indeed. However, his brother will make you amends; Joseph is, indeed, what a youth should be — everybody in the world speaks well of him.

Sir Oliv. I am sorry to hear it — he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him! Pshaw! then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue.

Sir Peter. What, Sir Oliver! do you blame him for not making enemies?

Sir Oliv. Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

Sir Peter. Well, well, you'll be convinced when you know him. 'T is edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

Sir Oliv. Oh, plague of his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter; I don't mean to defend Charles's errors: but, before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose.

Row. And Sir Peter shall own for once he has been mistaken.

Sir Peter. Oh, my life on Joseph's honour!

Sir Oliv. Well — come, give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink the lads' health, and tell you our scheme.

Sir Peter. Allons, then!

Sir Oliv. And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe

against your old friend's son. Odds my life! I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little: for my part, I hate to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth; 't is like ivy round a sapling, and spoils the growth of the tree. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House.*

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, and ROWLEY.

Sir Peter. Well, then we will see this fellow first, and have our wine afterwards. — But how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

Row. Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was once a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied, by letter, both to Mr. Surface and Charles: from the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do; and he is, at this time, endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

Sir Oliv. Ah! he is my brother's son.

Sir Peter. Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to —

Row. Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother, that Stanley has obtained permission to apply personally to his friends; and, as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his character, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging, at least, of the benevolence of their disposi-

tions: and believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother one who, in the midst of folly and dissipation, has still as our immortal bard expresses it, —

“a heart to pity, and a hand,
Open as day, for melting charity.”

Sir Peter. Pshaw! What signifies his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give? Well, well, — make the trial, if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles's affairs?

Row. Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. — This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance.

Sir Peter. Pray let us have him in.

Row. Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

[*Apart to SERVANT.*

Sir Peter. But, pray, why should you suppose he will speak the truth?

Row. Oh, I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his own interests. I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall shortly produce to remove some of your prejudices, Sir Peter, relative to Charles and Lady Teazle.

Sir Peter. I have heard too much on that subject.

Row. Here comes the honest Israelite. —

Enter MOSES.

— This is Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliv. Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew Charles.

Mos. Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him; but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

Sir Oliv. That was unlucky, truly; for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

Mos. None at all; I had n't the pleasure of knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

Sir Oliv. Unfortunate, indeed! — But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses?

Mos. Yes, he knows that. — This very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the city, who does not know him, and will, I believe, advance him some money.

Sir Peter. What — one Charles has never had money from before?

Mos. Yes, Mr. Premium, of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.

Sir Peter. Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me! — Charles, you say, does not know Mr. Premium?

Mos. Not at all.

Sir Peter. Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation! go with my friend Moses, and represent Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

Sir Oliv. Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as old Stanley.

Sir Peter. True — so you may.

Row. Well, this is taking Charles rather at a dis-

advantage, to be sure. However, Moses, you understand Sir Peter, and will be faithful?

Mos. You may depend upon me. — [*Looks at his watch.*] This is near the time I was to have gone.

Sir Oliv. I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Moses — But hold! I have forgot one thing — how the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew?

Mos. There's no need — the principal is Christian.

Sir Oliv. Is he? I'm very sorry to hear it. But, then again, an't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a money-lender?

Sir Peter. Not at all: 't would not be out of character, if you went in your own carriage — would it, Moses?

Mos. Not in the least.

Sir Oliv. Well, but how must I talk? there's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.

Sir Peter. Oh, there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands. Hey, Moses?

Mos. Yes, that's a very great point.

Sir Oliv. I'll answer for 't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan, at least.

Mos. If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.

Sir Oliv. Hey! — what the plague — how much then?

Mos. That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per cent; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double.

Sir Peter. A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver!

Sir Oliv. Truly, I think so — and not unprofitable.

Mos. 'Then, you know, you have n't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of a friend.

Sir Oliv. Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

Mos. And your friend is an unconscionable dog: but you can't help that.

Sir Oliv. My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

Mos. Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

Sir Oliv. He is forced to sell stock at a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.

Sir Peter. I' faith, Sir Oliver — Mr. Premium, I mean — you'll soon be master of the trade. But, Moses! would not you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill? That would be in character, I should think.

Mos. Very much.

Row. And lament that a young man now must be at years of discretion before he is suffered to ruin himself.

Mos. Ay, great pity.

Sir Peter. And abuse the public for allowing merit to an act whose only object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the rapacious gripe of usury, and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate without being undone by coming into possession.

Sir Oliv. So, so — Moses shall give me farther instructions as we go together.

Sir Peter. You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

Sir Oliv. Oh, never fear! my tutor appears so able,

that though Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner. *[Exit with MOSES.]*

Sir Peter. So, now, I think Sir Oliver will be convinced: you are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

Row. No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter. Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently. — I see Maria, and want to speak with her. — *[Exit ROWLEY.]* I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph — I am determined I will do it — he will give me his opinion sincerely.

Enter MARIA.

So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you?

Mar. No, sir; he was engaged.

Sir Peter. Well, Maria, do you not reflect, the more you converse with that amiable young man, what return his partiality for you deserves?

Mar. Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent importunity on this subject distresses me extremely — you compel me to declare that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention whom I would not prefer to Mr. Surface.

Sir Peter. So — here's perverseness! — No, no, Maria, 't is Charles only whom you would prefer. 'T is evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

Mar. This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him: I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it culpable,

if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his distresses.

Sir Peter. Well, well, pity him as much as you please; but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

Mar. Never to his brother!

Sir Peter. Go, perverse and obstinate! But take care, madam; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is: don't compel me to inform you of it.

Mar. I can only say you shall not have just reason. 'T is true, by my father's will, I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute; but must cease to think you so, when you would compel me to be miserable. [*Exit MARIA.*]

Sir Peter. Was ever man so crossed as I am? everything conspiring to fret me! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. — [*Lady Teazle sings without.*] But here comes my helpmate! She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little!

Enter LADY TEAZLE.

Lady Teaz. Lud! Sir Peter, I hope you have n't been quarrelling with Maria? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by.

Sir Peter. Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.

Lady Teaz. I am sure I wish I had; for I want you to be in a charming, sweet temper, at this moment. Do be good-humoured, now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

Sir Peter. Two hundred pounds; what, art thou be in a good humour without paying for it? speak to me thus, and I' faith there 's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it; but seal me a bond for the repayment.

Lady Teaz. Oh, no—there—my note of hand will do as well. [Offering her hand.]

Sir Peter. And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you:—but shall we always live thus, hey?

Lady Teaz. If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you 'll own you were tired first.

Sir Peter. Well—then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady Teaz. I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you. You look now, as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me, under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were, in your youth, and chuck me under the chin, you would; and ask me, if I thought I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing—did n't you?

Sir Peter. Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive——

Lady Teaz. Ay, so I was, and would always take your part, when my acquaintance used to abuse you, and turn you into ridicule.

Sir Peter. Indeed!

Lady Teaz. Ay, and when my cousin Sophy, has called you a stiff, peevish old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I have always defended you, and said, I did n't think you so ugly, by any means.

Sir Peter. Thank you.

Lady Teaz. And I dared say you'd make a very
 sort of a husband.

Sir Peter. And you prophesied right; and we
 shall now be the happiest couple —

Lady Teaz. And never differ again?

Sir Peter. No, never! — though at the same time,
 indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your
 temper very seriously; for in all our little quarrels,
 my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began
 first.

Lady Teaz. I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter :
 indeed you always gave the provocation.

Sir Peter. Now see, my angel! take care — con-
 tradicting is n't the way to keep friends.

Lady Teaz. Then don't you begin it, my love!

Sir Peter. There, now! you — you are going on.
 You don't perceive, my life, that you are just doing
 the very thing which you know always makes me
 angry.

Lady Teaz. Nay! you know if you will be angry,
 without any reason, my dear —

Sir Peter. There! now you want to quarrel again.

Lady Teaz. No, I'm sure I don't: but if you will
 be so peevish —

Sir Peter. There now! who begins first?

Lady Teaz. Why, you, to be sure. I said nothing
 — but there's no bearing your temper.

Sir Peter. No, no, madam: the fault's in your own
 temper.

Lady Teaz. Ay, you are just what my cousin
 Sophy said you would be.

Sir Peter. Your cousin Sophy is a forward, imperti-
 nent gipsy.

Lady Teaz. You are a great bear, I'm sure, to
 abuse my relations.

Sir Peter. Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me, if ever I try to be friends with you any more !

Lady Teaz. So much the better.

Sir Peter. No, no, madam : 't is evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you — a pert, rural coquette, that had refused half the honest 'squires in the neighbourhood !

Lady Teaz. And I am sure I was a fool to marry you — an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.

Sir Peter. Ay, ay, madam ; but you were pleased enough to listen to me : you never had such an offer before.

Lady Teaz. No ! did n't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match ? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married.

Sir Peter. I have done with you, madam ! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful — but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad. Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam. Yes, madam, *you* and Charles are, — not without grounds —

Lady Teaz. Take care, Sir Peter ! you had better not insinuate any such thing ! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

Sir Peter. Very well, madam ! very well ! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce ! I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors. Let us separate, madam.

Lady Teaz. Agreed ! agreed ! And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple, and never differ again, you

know: ha! ha! ha! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you — so, by! by! [Exit.

Sir Peter. Plagues and tortures! Can't I make her angry either! Oh, I am the most miserable fellow! But I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper: no! she may break my heart, but she shan't keep her temper. [Exit.

SCENE II. — *A Room in CHARLES SURFACE'S House.*

Enter TRIP, MOSES, and SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

Trip. Here, Master Moses! if you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether — what's the gentleman's name?

Sir Oliv. Mr. Moses, what is my name?

[*Aside to MOSES.*

Mos. Mr. Premium.

Trip. Premium — Very well.

[*Exit TRIP, taking snuff.*

Sir Oliv. To judge by the servants, one would n't believe the master was ruined. But what! — sure, this was my brother's house?

Mos. Yes, sir; Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph, with the furniture, pictures, &c., just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a piece of extravagance in him.

Sir Oliv. In my mind, the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half.

Reënter TRIP.

Trip. My master says you must wait, gentlemen: he has company, and can't speak with you yet.

Sir Oliv. If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not send such a message?

Trip. Yes, yes, sir; he knows you are here — I did not forget little Premium: no, no, no.

Sir Oliv. Very well; and I pray, sir, what may be your name?

Trip. Trip, sir; my name is Trip, at your service.

Sir Oliv. Well, then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess?

Trip. Why, yes — here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably enough; but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear — and not very great either — but fifty pounds a year, and find our own bags and bouquets!

Sir Oliv. Bags and bouquets! halts and bastinadoes. [*Aside.*

Trip. And *à propos*, Moses, — have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

Sir Oliv. Wants to raise money too! — mercy on me! Has his distresses too, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns. [*Aside.*

Mos. 'T was not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

Trip. Good lack, you surprise me! My friend Brush has indorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill 't was the same as cash.

Mos. No, 't would n't do.

Trip. A small sum — but twenty pounds. Hark'ee, Moses, do you think you could n't get it me by way of annuity?

Sir Oliv. An annuity! ha! ha! a footman raise money by way of annuity! Well done, luxury, egad!

[*Aside.*

Mos. Well, but you must insure your place.

Trip. Oh, with all my heart! I'll insure my place and my life too, if you please.

Sir Oliv. It is more than I would your neck.

[*Aside.*

Mos. But is there nothing you could deposit?

Trip. Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of redemption before November — or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver; — these, I should think, Moses, with a few pair of point ruffles, as a collateral security — hey, my little fellow?

Mos. Well, well.

[*Bell rings.*

Trip. Egad, I heard the bell! I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, little Moses! This way, gentlemen, I'll insure my place, you know.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *Another Room in the Same.*

CHARLES SURFACE, SIR HARRY BUMPER, CARELESS,
and GENTLEMEN, *discovered drinking.*

Chas. Surf. 'Fore heaven, 't is true! — there's the great degeneracy of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and politeness; but, plague on 't, they won't drink.

Care. It is so, indeed, Charles! they give in to all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit. Oh, certainly society suffers by it intolerably! for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to mantle over a glass of bright Burgundy, their conversation is become just like the Spa-water they drink, which has

all the pertness and flatulency of champagne, without its spirit or flavour.

1st Gent. But what are they to do who love play better than wine?

Care. True! there's Sir Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under a hazard regimen.

Chas. Surf. Then he'll have the worst of it. What! you would n't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn? For my part, egad, I am never so successful as when I am a little merry: let me throw on a bottle of champagne, and I never lose.

All. Hey, what?

Chas. Surf. At least I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

2d Gent. Ay, that I believe.

Chas. Surf. And then, what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who is an abjurer of wine? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats at the top is the maid that has bewitched you.

Care. Now then, Charles, be honest, and give us your real favourite.

Chas. Surf. Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible — on earth.

Care. Oh! then we'll find some canonized vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant!

Chas. Surf. Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria! —

Sir Har. Maria who?

Chas. Surf. Oh, damn the surname! — 't is too formal to be registered in Love's calendar — Maria!

All. Maria!

Chas. Surf. But now, Sir Harry, beware, we must have beauty superlative.

Care. Nay, never study, Sir Harry: we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.

Sir Har. Egad, so I have! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

SONG.

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, —
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize;
Now to the maid who has none, sir:
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but *one*, sir.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, &c.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow:
Now to her that's as brown as a berry,
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the damsel that's merry.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, &c.

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
So fill up your glasses, nay, fill to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, &c.

All. Bravo! bravo!

Enter TRIP, and whispers CHARLES SURFACE.

Chas. Surf. Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little, — Careless, take the chair, will you?

Care. Nay, pr'ythee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropped in by chance?

Chas. Surf. No, faith! To tell you the truth, 't is a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

Care. Oh, damn it! let 's have the Jew in.

1st Gent. Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

2d Gent. Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

Chas. Surf. Egad, with all my heart! — Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in. — [*Exit TRIP.*] Though there 's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

Care. Charles, let us give them some generous Burgundy, and perhaps they 'll grow conscientious.

Chas. Surf. Oh, hang 'em, no! wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities; and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery.

Reënter TRIP, with SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES.

Chas. Surf. So, honest Moses; walk in, pray, Mr. Premium — that 's the gentleman's name, is n't it, Moses?

Mos. Yes, sir.

Chas. Surf. Set chairs, Trip. — Sit down, Mr. Premium. — Glasses, Trip. — [*Gives chairs and glasses, and exit.*] Sit down, Moses. — Come, Mr. Premium, I 'll give you a sentiment; here 's *Success to usury!* — Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

Mos. *Success to usury!*

[*Drinks.*

Care. Right, Moses — usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

Sir Oliv. Then — *here's all the success it deserves!*
[*Drinks.*]

Care. No, no, that won't do! Mr. Premium, you have demurred at the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

1st Gent. A pint bumper, at least.

Mos. Oh, pray, sir, consider — Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

Care. And therefore loves good wine.

2d Gent. Give Moses a quart glass — this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

Care. Here, now for 't! I'll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

Sir Oliv. Nay, pray, gentlemen — I did not expect this usage.

Chas. Surf. No, hang it, you shan't; Mr. Premium's a stranger.

Sir Oliv. Odd! I wish I was well out of their company.
[*Aside.*]

Care. Plague on 'em! if they won't drink, we'll not sit down with them. Come, Harry, the dice are in the next room. — Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business with the gentlemen?

Chas. Surf. I will! I will! — [*Exeunt SIR HARRY BUMPER and GENTLEMEN; CARELESS following.*]
Careless!

Care. [*Returning.*] Well!

Chas. Surf. Perhaps I may want you.

Care. Oh, you know I am always ready: word, note, or bond, 't is all the same to me.
[*Exit.*]

Mos. Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is —

Chas. Surf. Pshaw! have done. Sir, my friend

Moses is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression: he 'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this: I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money; you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent sooner than not have it; and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without farther ceremony.

Sir Oliv. Exceeding frank, upon my word. I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

Chas. Surf. Oh, no, sir! plain dealing in business I always think best.

Sir Oliv. Sir, I like you the better for it. However, you are mistaken in one thing; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend; but then he 's an unconscionable dog. Is n't he, Moses?

Mos. But you can't help that.

Sir Oliv. And must sell stock to accommodate you. — Must n't he, Moses?

Mos. Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie!

Chas. Surf. Right. People that speak truth generally do. But these are trifles, Mr. Premium. What! I know money is n't to be bought without paying for 't!

Sir Oliv. Well, but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

Chas. Surf. Not a mole-hill, nor a twig, but what 's in the bough-pots out of the window!

Sir Oliv. Nor any stock, I presume?

Chas. Surf. Nothing but live stock — and that 's only a few pointers and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connections?

Sir Oliv. Why, to say truth, I am.

Chas. Surf. Then you must know that I have a devilish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations?

Sir Oliv. That you have a wealthy uncle, I have heard; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.

Chas. Surf. Oh, no! — there can be no doubt. They tell me I'm a prodigious favourite, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

Sir Oliv. Indeed! this is the first I've heard of it.

Chas. Surf. Yes, yes, 't is just so. — Moses knows 't is true; don't you, Moses?

Mos. Oh, yes! I'll swear to 't.

Sir Oliv. Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal. [*Aside.*

Chas. Surf. Now I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you, a post-obit on Sir Oliver's life; though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me, that I give you my word, I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to him.

Sir Oliv. Not more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me — for I might live to a hundred and never see the principal.

Chas. Surf. Oh, yes, you would! the moment Sir Oliver dies, you know, you would come on me for the money.

Sir Oliv. 'Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome dun you ever had in your life.

Chas. Surf. What! I suppose you're afraid that Sir Oliver is too good a life?

Sir Oliv. No, indeed I am not; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

Chas. Surf. There, again, now you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor uncle Oliver. Yes, yes, he breaks apace, I'm told — and is so much altered lately that his nearest relations don't know him.

Sir Oliv. No! Ha! ha! ha! so much altered lately that his nearest relations don't know him! Ha! ha! ha! egad — ha! ha! ha!

Chas. Surf. Ha! ha! — you're glad to hear that, little Premium?

Sir Oliv. No, no, I'm not.

Chas. Surf. Yes, yes, you are — ha! ha! ha! — you know that mends your chance.

Sir Oliv. But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over; nay, some say he is actually arrived.

Chas. Surf. Pshaw! sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on't he's at this moment at Calcutta. — Is n't he, Moses?

Mos. Oh, yes, certainly.

Sir Oliv. Very true, as you say, you must know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority. — Have n't I, Moses?

Mos. Yes, most undoubtedly!

Sir Oliv. But, sir, as I understand, you want a few hundreds immediately, — is there nothing you could dispose of?

Chas. Surf. How do you mean?

Sir Oliv. For instance, now, I have heard that

your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate.

Chas. Surf. O Lud ! that 's gone long ago. Moses can tell you how better than I can.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] Good lack ! all the family race-cups and corporation-bowls ! [*Aloud.*] Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and compact —

Chas. Surf. Yes, yes, so it was — vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] Mercy upon me ! learning that had run in the family like an heir-loom — [*Aloud.*] Pray, what are become of the books ?

Chas. Surf. You must inquire of the auctioneer, Master Premium ; for I don't believe even Moses can direct you.

Mos. I know nothing of books.

Sir Oliv. So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose ?

Chas. Surf. Not much, indeed ; unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above ; and if you have a taste for old paintings, egad, you shall have 'em a bargain !

Sir Oliv. Hey ! what the devil ! sure, you would n't sell your forefathers, would you ?

Chas. Surf. Every man of them, to the best bidder.

Sir Oliv. What, your great-uncles and aunts ?

Chas. Surf. Ay, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers too.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] Now I give him up ! — [*Aloud.*] What the plague, have you no bowels for your own kindred ? Odd's life ! do you take me for Shylock

in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood?

Chas. Surf. Nay, my little broker, don't be angry: what need you care, if you have your money's worth?

Sir Oliv. Well, I'll be the purchaser: I think I can dispose of the family canvas. — [*Aside.*] Oh, I'll never forgive him this! never!

Reënter CARELESS.

Care. Come, Charles, what keeps you?

Chas. Surf. I can't come yet. I' faith, we are going to have a sale above-stairs; here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors!

Care. Oh, burn your ancestors!

Chas. Surf. No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you: egad, you shall be auctioneer — so come along with us.

Care. Oh, have with you, if that's the case. I can handle a hammer as well as a dice-box! Going! going!

Sir Oliv. Oh, the profligates! [*Aside.*

Chas. Surf. Come, Moses, you shall be appraiser, if we want one. Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business?

Sir Oliv. Oh, yes, I do, vastly! Ha! ha! ha! yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction — ha! ha! — [*Aside.*] Oh, the prodigal!

Chas. Surf. To be sure! when a man wants money, where the plague should he get assistance, if he can't make free with his own relations?

Sir Oliv. I'll never forgive him; never! never!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *A Picture Room in CHARLES SURFACE'S House.*

Enter CHARLES SURFACE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, MOSES, *and* CARELESS.

Chas. Surf. Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in ; — here they are, the family of the Surfaces, up to the Conquest.

Sir Oliv. And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

Chas. Surf. Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of portrait-painting ; no *volontière grace* or expression. Not like the works of your modern Raphaels, who give you the strongest resemblance, yet contrive to make your portrait independent of you ; so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture. — No, no ; the merit of these is the inveterate likeness — all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature besides.

Sir Oliv. Ah ! we shall never see such figures of men again.

Chas. Surf. I hope not. — Well, you see, Master Premium, what a domestic character I am ; here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family. — But come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer ; here 's an old gouty chair of my grandfather's will answer the purpose.

Care. Ay, ay, this will do. — But, Charles, I have n't a hammer ; and what 's an auctioneer without his hammer ?

Chas. Surf. Egad, that's true. What parchment have we here? Oh, our genealogy in full. [*Taking pedigree down.*] Here, Careless, you shall have no common bit of mahogany, here's the family tree for you, you rogue! This shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

Sir Oliv. What an unnatural rogue! — an *ex post facto* parricide! [*Aside.*

Care. Yes, yes, here's a list of your generation indeed; — faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 't will not only serve as a hammer, but a catalogue into the bargain. Come, begin — A-going, a-going, a-going!

Chas. Surf. Bravo, Careless! Well, here's my great-uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the battle of Malplaquet. What say you, Mr. Premium? look at him — there's a hero! not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipped captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be. — What do you bid?

Sir Oliv. [*Aside to Moses.*] Bid him speak.

Mos. Mr. Premium would have *you* speak.

Chas. Surf. Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not dear for a staff-officer.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] Heaven deliver me! his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds! — [*Aloud.*] Very well, sir, I take him at that.

Chas. Surf. Careless, knock down my uncle Richard. — Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great-aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be

in his best manner, and a very formidable likeness. There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock. You shall have her for five pounds ten—the sheep are worth the money.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] Ah! poor Deborah! a woman who set such a value on herself!—[*Aloud.*] Five pounds ten—she's mine.

Chas. Surf. Knock down my aunt Deborah!—Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs.—You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.

Sir Oliv. Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

Chas. Surf. Well, take that couple for the same.

Mos. 'T is a good bargain.

Chas. Surf. Careless!—This, now, is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit.—What do you rate him at, Moses?

Mos. Four guineas.

Chas. Surf. Four guineas! Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig.—Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the woolsack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

Sir Oliv. By all means.

Care. Gone!

Chas. Surf. And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt, Esquires, both members of parliament, and noted speakers; and, what's very extraordinary, I believe, this is the first time they were ever bought or sold.

Sir Oliv. That is very extraordinary, indeed! I'll take them at your own price, for the honour of parliament.

Care. Well said, little Premium! — I'll knock them down at forty.

Chas. Surf. Here's a jolly fellow — I don't know what relation, but he was mayor of Manchester; take him at eight pounds.

Sir Oliv. No, no; six will do for the mayor.

Chas. Surf. Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.

Sir Oliv. They're mine.

Chas. Surf. Careless, knock down the mayor and aldermen. — But, plague on't! we shall be all day retailing in this manner: do let us deal wholesale; what say you, little Premium? Give me three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

Care. Ay, ay, that will be the best way.

Sir Oliv. Well, well, anything to accommodate you; they are mine. But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.

Care. What, that ill-looking little fellow over the settee?

Sir Oliv. Yes, sir, I mean that; though I don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow, by any means.

Chas. Surf. What, that? — Oh; that's my uncle Oliver! 't was done before he went to India.

Care. Your uncle Oliver! — Gad, then you'll never be friends, Charles. That, now, to me, is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw; an unforgiving eye, and a damned disinheriting countenance! an inveterate knave, depend on't. Don't you think so, little Premium?

Sir Oliv. Upon my soul, sir, I do not; I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive. — But I suppose uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber?

Chas. Surf. No, hang it! I'll not part with poor

Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] The rogue's my nephew after all! — [*Aloud.*] But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

Chas. Surf. I'm sorry for 't, for you certainly will not have it. Oons, have n't you got enough of them?

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] I forgive him everything! — [*Aloud.*] But, sir, when I take a whim in my head, I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.

Chas. Surf. Don't tease me, master broker; I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] How like his father the dog is! — [*Aloud.*] Well, well, I have done. — [*Aside.*] I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance. — [*Aloud.*] Here is a draft for your sum.

Chas. Surf. Why, 't is for eight hundred pounds!

Sir Oliv. You will not let Sir Oliver go?

Chas. Surf. Zounds! no! I tell you once more.

Sir Oliv. Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time. — But give me your hand on the bargain; you are an honest fellow, Charles — I beg pardon, sir, for being so free. — Come, Moses.

Chas. Surf. Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow! — But hark'ee, Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen.

Sir Oliv. Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

Chas. Surf. But hold; do now send a genteel conveyance for them, for, I assure you, they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

Sir Oliv. I will, I will, — for all but Oliver.

Chas. Surf. Ay, all but the little nabob.

Sir Oliv. You're fixed on that?

Chas. Surf. Peremptorily.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] A dear extravagant rogue! —

[*Aloud.*] Good day! — Come, Moses. — [*Aside.*]

Let me hear now who dares call him profligate!

[*Exit with MOSES.*]

Care. Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever met with!

Chas. Surf. Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how the devil Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow. — Ha! here's Rowley. — Do, Careless, say I'll join the company in a few moments.

Care. I will — but don't let that old blockhead persuade you to squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows.

Chas. Surf. Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

Care. Nothing else.

Chas. Surf. Ay, ay, never fear. — [*Exit CARELESS.*]
So! this was an odd old fellow, indeed. — Let me see, two-thirds of this is mine by right, five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore Heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for! — Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful servant. — [*Bows ceremoniously to the pictures.*]

Enter ROWLEY.

Ha! old Rowley! egad, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

Row. Yes, I heard they were a-going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

Chas. Surf. Why, there's the point! my distresses

are so many, that I can't afford to part with my spirits; but I shall be rich and splenetic, all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations: to be sure, 't is very affecting, but you see they never move a muscle, so why should I?

Row. There's no making you serious a moment.

Chas. Surf. Yes, faith, I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here, get me this changed directly, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately to old Stanley.

Row. A hundred pounds. Consider only ——

Chas. Surf. Gad's life, don't talk about it! poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and, if you don't make haste, we shall have some one call that has a better right to the money.

Row. Ah! there's the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb ——

Chas. Surf. *Be just before you're generous.* — Why, so I would if I could; but Justice is an old, hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace with Generosity, for the soul of me.

Row. Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection ——

Chas. Surf. Ay, ay, it's very true; but, hark'ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I'll give: so, damn your economy! and now for hazard. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. — *Another Room in the Same.*

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES.

Mos. Well, sir, I think, as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory; 't is great pity he's so extravagant.

Sir Oliv. True, but he would not sell my picture.

Mos. And loves wine and women so much.

Sir Oliv. But he would not sell my picture.

Mos. And game so deep.

Sir Oliv. But he would not sell my picture. Oh, here 's Rowley.

Enter ROWLEY.

Row. So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase ——

Sir Oliv. Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

Row. And here has he commissioned me to redeliver you part of the purchase-money — I mean, though, in your necessitous character of old Stanley.

Mos. Ah! there is the pity of all! he is so damned charitable.

Row. And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I 'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy them.

Sir Oliv. Well, well, I'll pay his debts and his benevolence too. But now I am no more a broker, and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

Row. Not yet awhile; Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time.

Enter TRIP.

Trip. Oh, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out: this way — Moses, a word.

[*Exit with MOSES.*

Sir Oliv. There 's a fellow for you! Would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our

coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master !

Row. Indeed !

Sir Oliv. Yes, they are now planning an annuity business. Ah, Master Rowley, in my days servants were content with the follies of their masters, when they were worn a little threadbare ; but now they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the gloss on. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. — *A Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House.*

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT.

Jos. Surf. No letter from Lady Teazle ?

Serv. No, sir.

Jos. Surf. [*Aside.*] I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet I wish I may not lose the heiress through the scrape I have drawn myself into with the wife : however, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour. [*Knocking heard without.*]

Serv. Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

Jos. Surf. Hold ! See whether it is or not, before you go to the door : I have a particular message for you if it should be my brother.

Serv. 'T is her ladyship, sir ; she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

Jos. Surf. Stay, stay ; draw that screen before the window — that will do ; — my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so curious a temper. — [SERVANT draws the screen, and exit.] I have a difficult hand

to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria; but she must by no means be let into that secret, — at least till I have her more in my power.

Enter LADY TEAZLE.

Lady Teaz. What, sentiment in soliloquy now? Have you been very impatient? O Lud! don't pretend to look grave. I vow I could n't come before.

Jos. Surf. O madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, very unfashionable in a lady of quality.

[Places chairs and sits after LADY TEAZLE is seated.]

Lady Teaz. Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know Sir Peter has grown so ill-natured to me of late, and so jealous of Charles too — that 's the best of the story, is n't it?

Jos. Surf. I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up. *[Aside.]*

Lady Teaz. I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced; don't you, Mr. Surface?

Jos. Surf. *[Aside.]* Indeed I do not. — *[Aloud.]* Oh, certainly I do! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

Lady Teaz. Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But is n't it provoking, to have the most ill-natured things said of one? And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too; — that's what vexes me.

Jos. Surf. Ay, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance — without foundation; yes, yes, there's the mortification, indeed; for, when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly

is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.

Lady Teaz. No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice ; but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody — that is, of any friend ; and then Sir Peter, too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart — indeed 't is monstrous !

Jos. Surf. But, my dear Lady Teazle, 't is your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife, and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is broken, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to endeavour to outwit him.

Lady Teaz. Indeed ! — So that, if he suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for 't ?

Jos. Surf. Undoubtedly — for your husband should never be deceived in you : and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment.

Lady Teaz. To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my innocence —

Jos. Surf. Ah, my dear madam, there is the great mistake ! 't is this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's opinion ? why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences ? why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and outrageous at his suspicions ? why, the consciousness of your innocence.

Lady Teaz. 'T is very true !

Jos. Surf. Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

Lady Teaz. Do you think so ?

Jos. Surf. Oh, I am sure on't ; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for — in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

Lady Teaz. So, so ; then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation ?

Jos. Surf. Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

Lady Teaz. Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny !

Jos. Surf. An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

Lady Teaz. Why, if my understanding were once convinced —

Jos. Surf. Oh, certainly, madam, your understanding should be convinced. Yes, yes, — Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you thought wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

Lady Teaz. Don't you think we may as well leave honour out of the argument ?

[*Rises.*

Jos. Surf. Ah, the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you.

Lady Teaz. I doubt they do indeed ; and I will fairly own to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than your *honourable logic*, after all.

Jos. Surf. Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of —

[*Taking her hand.*

Reënter SERVANT.

'Sdeath, you blockhead — what do you want?

Serv. I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you would not choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

Jos. Surf. Sir Peter! — Oons — the devil!

Lady Teaz. Sir Peter! O Lud! I'm ruined! I'm ruined!

Serv. Sir, 't was n't I let him in.

Lady Teaz. Oh! I'm quite undone! What will become of me? Now, Mr. Logic — Oh! mercy, sir, he's on the stairs — I'll get behind here — and if ever I'm so imprudent again —

[*Goes behind the screen.*]

Jos. Surf. Give me that book.

[*Sits down.* SERVANT *pretends to adjust his chair.*]

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE.

Sir Peter. Ay, ever improving himself — Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface —

[*Pats* JOSEPH *on the shoulder.*]

Jos. Surf. Oh, my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon — [*Gaping, throws away the book.*] I have been dozing over a stupid book. Well, I am much obliged to you for this call. You have n't been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room. Books, you know, are the only things in which I am a coxcomb.

Sir Peter. 'T is very neat indeed. — Well, well, that's proper; and you can make even your screen a source of knowledge — hung, I perceive, with maps.

Jos. Surf. Oh, yes, I find great use in that screen.

Sir Peter. I dare say you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry.

Jos. Surf. Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either. [Aside.

Sir Peter. Well, I have a little private business —

Jos. Surf. You need not stay. [To SERVANT.

Serv. No, sir. [Exit.

Jos. Surf. Here 's a chair, Sir Peter — I beg —

Sir Peter. Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburden my mind to you — a point of the greatest moment to my peace ; in short, my good friend, Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me very unhappy.

Jos. Surf. Indeed ! I am very sorry to hear it.

Sir Peter. Yes, 't is but too plain she has not the least regard for me ; but, what 's worse, I have pretty good authority to suppose she has formed an attachment to another.

Jos. Surf. Indeed ! you astonish me !

Sir Peter. Yes ! and, between ourselves, I think I 've discovered the person.

Jos. Surf. How ! you alarm me exceedingly.

Sir Peter. Ay, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathize with me !

Jos. Surf. Yes, believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

Sir Peter. I am convinced of it. — Ah ! it is a happiness to have a friend whom we can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean ?

Jos. Surf. I have n't the most distant idea. It can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite !

Sir Peter. Oh, no ! What say you to Charles ?

Jos. Surf. My brother ! impossible !

Sir Peter. Oh, my dear friend, the goodness of

your own heart misleads you. You judge of others by yourself.

Jos. Surf. Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery.

Sir Peter. True ; but your brother has no sentiment — you never hear him talk so.

Jos. Surf. Yet I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

Sir Peter. Ay ; but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow ?

Jos. Surf. That's very true.

Sir Peter. And then, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any great affection for me ; and if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

Jos. Surf. That's true, to be sure — they would laugh.

Sir Peter. Laugh ! ay, and make ballads, and paragraphs, and the devil knows what of me.

Jos. Surf. No, — you must never make it public.

Sir Peter. But then again — that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.

Jos. Surf. Ay, there's the point. When ingratitude bars the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

Sir Peter. Ay — I, that was, in a manner, left his guardian : in whose house he had been so often entertained ; who never in my life denied him — my advice !

Jos. Surf. Oh, 't is not to be credited ! There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure ;

but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine — I disclaim kindred with him: for the man who can break the laws of hospitality, and tempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

Sir Peter. What a difference there is between you! What noble sentiments!

Jos. Surf. Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

Sir Peter. I am sure I wish to think well of her, and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her; and, in our last quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall have her own way, and be her own mistress in that respect for the future; and, if I were to die, she will find I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on. — By one, she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live; and by the other, the bulk of my fortune at my death.

Jos. Surf. This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous. — [*Aside.*] I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

Sir Peter. Yes, I am determined she shall have no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

Jos. Surf. Nor I, if I could help it. [*Aside.*]

Sir Peter. And now, my dear friend, if you please, we will talk over the situation of your hopes with Maria.

Jos. Surf. [*Softly.*] Oh, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

Sir Peter. I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affections.

Jos. Surf. [*Softly.*] I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate!—[*Aside.*] 'Sdeath, I shall be ruined every way!

Sir Peter. And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion for Maria, I'm sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

Jos. Surf. Pray, Sir Peter, now oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking of, to bestow a thought on my own concerns. The man who is entrusted with his friend's distresses can never——

Reënter SERVANT.

Well, sir?

Serv. Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and says he knows you are within.

Jos. Surf. 'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within—I'm out for the day.

Sir Peter. Stay—hold—a thought has struck me:—you shall be at home.

Jos. Surf. Well, well, let him up.—[*Exit SERVANT.*] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter. Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you.—Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere,—then do you tax him on the point we have been talking, and his answer may satisfy me at once.

Jos. Surf. Oh, fie, Sir Peter! would you have me join in so mean a trick?—to trepan my brother too?

Sir Peter. Nay, you tell me you are sure he is innocent; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me: [*Going up,*] here behind the screen will be—Hey! what the devil! there seems to be one listener here already—I'll swear I saw a petticoat!

Jos. Surf. Ha! ha! ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet, you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either! Hark'ee, 't is a little French milliner,—a silly rogue that plagues me;—and having some character to lose, on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

Sir Peter. Ah, Joseph! Joseph! Did I ever think that you—— But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

Jos. Surf. Oh, 't will never go any farther, you may depend upon it!

Sir Peter. No! then, faith, let her hear it out.—Here's a closet will do as well.

Jos. Surf. Well, go in there.

Sir Peter. Sly rogue! sly rogue!

[*Goes into the closet.*]

Jos. Surf. A narrow escape, indeed! and a curious situation I'm in, to part man and wife in this manner.

Lady Teaz. [*Peeping.*] Could n't I steal off?

Jos. Surf. Keep close, my angel!

Sir Peter. [*Peeping.*] Joseph, tax him home.

Jos. Surf. Back, my dear friend!

Lady Teaz. [*Peeping.*] Could n't you lock Sir Peter in?

Jos. Surf. Be still, my life!

Sir Peter. [*Peeping.*] You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

Jos. Surf. In, in, my dear Sir Peter! — 'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to the door.

Enter CHARLES SURFACE.

Chas. Surf. Holla! brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow would not let me up at first. What! have you had a Jew or a wench with you?

Jos. Surf. Neither, brother, I assure you.

Chas. Surf. But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

Jos. Surf. He *was*, brother; but, hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

Chas. Surf. What! was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

Jos. Surf. No, sir: but I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

Chas. Surf. Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. — But how so, pray?

Jos. Surf. To be plain with you, brother, — he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

Chas. Surf. Who, I? O Lud! not I, upon my word. — Ha! ha! ha! ha! so the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? — or, what is worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband?

Jos. Surf. This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh —

Chas. Surf. True, true, as you were going to say — then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

Jos. Surf. Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this. [*Raising his voice.*]

Chas. Surf. To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement. — Besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

Jos. Surf. But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you —

Chas. Surf. Why, look'ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonourable action; but if a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way — and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father —

Jos. Surf. Well!

Chas. Surf. Why, I believe I should be obliged to —

Jos. Surf. What?

Chas. Surf. To borrow a little of your morality, that's all. But, brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly, by naming *me* with Lady Teazle; for, i' faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

Jos. Surf. Oh, for shame, Charles! This retort is foolish.

Chas. Surf. Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances —

Jos. Surf. Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

Chas. Surf. Egad, I'm serious! Don't you remember one day, when I called here —

Jos. Surf. Nay, pr'ythee, Charles —

Chas. Surf. And found you together —

Jos. Surf. Zounds, sir, I insist —

Chas. Surf. And another time when your servant —

Jos. Surf. Brother, brother, a word with you. — [*Aside.*] Gad, I must stop him.

Chas. Surf. Informed, I say, that ——

Jos. Surf. Hush! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

Chas. Surf. How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

Jos. Surf. Softly, there! [*Points to the closet.*]

Chas. Surf. Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth!

Jos. Surf. No, no ——

Chas. Surf. I say, Sir Peter, come into court. — [*Pulls in SIR PETER.*] What! my old guardian! — What! turn inquisitor, and take evidence incog.? Oh, fie! Oh, fie!

Sir Peter. Give me your hand, Charles — I believe I have suspected you wrongfully: but you must n't be angry with Joseph — 't was my plan!

Chas. Surf. Indeed.

Sir Peter. But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did: what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

Chas. Surf. Egad, then, 't was lucky you did n't hear any more. Was n't it, Joseph?

[*Aside to JOSEPH.*]

Sir Peter. Ah! you would have retorted on him.

Chas. Surf. Ah, ay, that was a joke.

Sir Peter. Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

Chas. Surf. But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter, for all that. Might n't he, Joseph?

[*Aside to JOSEPH.*]

Sir Peter. Well, well, I believe you.

Jos. Surf. Would they were both out of the room!

[*Aside.*]

Sir Peter. And in future, perhaps we may not be such strangers.

Reënter SERVANT, and whispers JOSEPH SURFACE.

Serv. Lady Sneerwell is below, and says she will come up.

Jos. Surf. Lady Sneerwell! Gad's life! she must not come here. [*Exit SERVANT.*] Gentlemen, I beg pardon — I must wait on you down stairs: here is a person come on particular business.

Chas. Surf. Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

Jos. Surf. [*Aside.*] They must not be left together. — [*Aloud.*] I'll send this man away, and return directly. — [*Aside to SIR PETER.*] Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

Sir Peter. [*Aside to JOSEPH SURFACE.*] I! not for the world! — [*Exit JOSEPH SURFACE.*] Ah, Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment. — Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment.

Chas. Surf. Pshaw! he is too moral by half; and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl.

Sir Peter. No, no, — come, come, — you wrong him. No, no! Joseph is no rake, but he is no such saint either in that respect. — [*Aside.*] I have a great mind to tell him — we should have such a laugh at Joseph.

Chas. Surf. Oh, hang him! he's a very anchorite, a young hermit.

Sir Peter. Hark'ee — you must not abuse him: he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

Chas. Surf. Why, you won't tell him?

Sir Peter. No — but — this way. — [*Aside.*] Egad, I'll tell him. — [*Aloud.*] Hark'ee — have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

Chas. Surf. I should like it of all things.

Sir Peter. Then, i' faith, we will! — I'll be quit with him for discovering me. — He had a girl with him when I called. [*Whispers.*

Chas. Surf. What! Joseph? you jest.

Sir Peter. Hush! — a little French milliner — and the best of the jest is — she is in the room now.

Chas. Surf. The devil she is!

Sir Peter. Hush! I tell you. [*Points to the screen.*

Chas. Surf. Behind the screen! 'Slife, let's unveil her!

Sir Peter. No, no, — he's coming: — you shan't indeed!

Chas. Surf. Oh, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner!

Sir Peter. Not for the world! — Joseph will never forgive me.

Chas. Surf. I'll stand by you —

Sir Peter. Odds, here he is!

Reënter JOSEPH SURFACE just as CHARLES SURFACE throws down the screen.

Chas. Surf. Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful.

Sir Peter. Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!

Chas. Surf. Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret. Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word! — Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter? What! is Morality dumb too? — Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now!

All mute! — Well — though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another; so I will leave you to yourselves. — [*Going.*] Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man grounds for so much uneasiness. — Sir Peter! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment! [*They stand for some time looking at each other.*] [*Exit CHARLES.*]

Jos. Surf. Sir Peter — notwithstanding — I confess — that appearances are against me — if you will afford me your patience — I make no doubt — but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

Sir Peter. If you please, sir.

Jos. Surf. The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward Maria — I say sir, Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper — and knowing my friendship to the family — she, sir, I say — called here — in order that — I might explain these pretensions — but on your coming — being apprehensive — as I said — of your jealousy — she withdrew — and this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

Sir Peter. A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

Lady Teaz. For not one word of it, Sir Peter!

Sir Peter. How! don't you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

Lady Teaz. There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.

Sir Peter. I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am!

Jos. Surf. [*Aside to LADY TEAZLE.*] 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

Lady Teaz. Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I'll speak for myself.

Sir Peter. Ay, let her alone, sir ; you 'll find she 'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

Lady Teaz. Hear me, Sir Peter !—I came here on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her. But I came, seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

Sir Peter. Now, I believe, the truth is coming, indeed !

Jos. Surf. The woman 's mad.

Lady Teaz. No, sir ; she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.—Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me—but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has so penetrated to my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward—I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him. *[Exit LADY TEAZLE.]*

Jos. Surf. Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows ——

Sir Peter. That you are a villain ! and so I leave you to your conscience.

Jos. Surf. You are too rash, Sir Peter ; you shall hear me. The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to ——

Sir Peter. Oh, damn your sentiments !

[Exeunt SIR PETER and JOSEPH SURFACE, talking.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House.**Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT.*

Jos. Surf. Mr. Stanley! and why should you think I would see him? you must know he comes to ask something.

Serv. Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him.

Jos. Surf. Psha! blockhead! to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations!—Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

Serv. I will, sir.—Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady——

Jos. Surf. Go, fool!—[*Exit SERVANT.*] Sure Fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before! My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a moment! I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses! I shan't be able to bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanley.—So! here he comes, and Rowley with him. I must try to recover myself, and put a little charity into my face, however. [*Exit.*]

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY.

Sir Oliv. What! does he avoid us? That was he, was it not?

Row. It was, sir. But I doubt you are come a little too abruptly. His nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first to break it to him.

Sir Oliv. Oh, plague of his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking!

Row. As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide; for, to do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

Sir Oliv. Yet he has a string of charitable sentiments at his fingers' ends.

Row. Or, rather, at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has such faith in as that *Charity begins at home*.

Sir Oliv. And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all.

Row. I doubt you'll find it so;—but he's coming. I must n't seem to interrupt you; and you know, immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

Sir Oliv. True; and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

Row. Without losing a moment. [Exit.

Sir Oliv. I don't like the complaisance of his features.

Reënter JOSEPH SURFACE.

Jos. Surf. Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting—Mr. Stanley, I presume.

Sir Oliv. At your service.

Jos. Surf. Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down — I entreat you, sir —

Sir Oliv. Dear sir — there's no occasion. [*Aside.*] Too civil by half !

Jos. Surf. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley ; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley.

Sir Oliv. I was, sir ; so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have presumed to trouble you.

Jos. Surf. Dear sir, there needs no apology ; — he that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was one of that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief.

Sir Oliv. If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

Jos. Surf. I wish he was, sir, with all my heart : you should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir.

Sir Oliv. I should not need one — my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent of his charity.

Jos. Surf. My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy man ; but avarice, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing ; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose to contradict the report.

Sir Oliv. What ! has he never transmitted you bullion — rupees — pagodas ?

Jos. Surf. Oh, dear sir, nothing of the kind ! No, no ; a few presents now and then — china, shawls,

congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers — little more, believe me.

Sir Oliv. Here 's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds! — Avadavats and Indian crackers! [*Aside.*

Jos. Surf. Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother: there are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

Sir Oliv. Not I, for one! [*Aside.*

Jos. Surf. The sums I have lent him! — Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame; it was an amiable weakness; however, I don't pretend to defend it, — and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Stanley, as my heart dictates.

Sir Oliv. [*Aside.*] Dissembler! — [*Aloud.*] Then, sir, you can't assist me?

Jos. Surf. At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

Sir Oliv. I am extremely sorry —

Jos. Surf. Not more than I, believe me; to pity without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Sir Oliv. Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

Jos. Surf. You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley. — William, be ready to open the door.

[*Calls to SERVANT.*

Sir Oliv. Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

Jos. Surf. Your very obedient.

Sir Oliv. Sir, your most obsequious.

Jos. Surf. You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

Sir Oliv. Sweet sir, you are too good!

Jos. Surf. In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

Sir Oliv. Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

Jos. Surf. Sir, yours as sincerely.

Sir. Oliv. [*Aside.*] Charles, you are my heir !

[*Exit.*

Jos. Surf. This is one bad effect of a good character ; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities ; whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.

Reënter ROWLEY.

Row. Mr. Surface, your servant : I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you.

Jos. Surf. Always happy to see Mr. Rowley, — a rascal. — [*Aside. Reads the letter.*] Sir Oliver Surface ! — My uncle arrived !

Row. He is, indeed : we have just parted — quite well, after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

Jos. Surf. I am astonished ! — William ! stop Mr. Stanley, if he's not gone. [*Calls to SERVANT.*

Row. Oh ! he's out of reach, I believe.

Jos. Surf. Why did you not let me know this when you came in together ?

Row. I thought you had particular business. But I must be gone to inform your brother, and appoint

him here to meet your uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

Jos. Surf. So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming. — [*Aside.*] Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky!

Row. You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

Jos. Surf. Ah! I'm rejoiced to hear it. — [*Aside.*] Just at this time!

Row. I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

Jos. Surf. Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing him. [*Exit ROWLEY.*] Certainly his coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill-fortune. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II. — *A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House.*

Enter MRS. CANDOUR and MAID.

Maid. Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

Mrs. Can. Did you tell her it was her friend, Mrs. Candour?

Maid. Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will excuse her.

Mrs. Can. Do go again: I shall be glad to see her, if it be only for a moment, for I'm sure she must be in great distress. — [*Exit MAID.*] Dear heart, how provoking! I'm not mistress of half the circumstances! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of the parties at

length, before I have dropped the story at a dozen houses.

Enter SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE.

Oh, dear Sir Benjamin! you have heard, I suppose

Sir Benj. Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface ——

Mrs. Can. And Sir Peter's discovery ——

Sir Benj. Oh, the strangest piece of business, to be sure!

Mrs. Can. Well, I never was so surprised in my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed.

Sir Benj. Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all: he was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Surface.

Mrs. Can. Mr. Surface! Why, 't was with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

Sir Benj. No, no, I tell you: Mr. Surface is the gallant.

Mrs. Can. No such thing! Charles is the man. 'T was Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

Sir Benj. I tell you I had it from one ——

Mrs. Can. And I have it from one ——

Sir Benj. Who had it from one, who had it ——

Mrs. Can. From one immediately — But here comes Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

Enter LADY SNEERWELL.

Lady Sneer. So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle!

Mrs. Can. Ay, my dear friend, who would have thought ——

Lady Sneer. Well, there is no trusting appearances; though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.

Mrs. Can. To be sure, her manners were a little too free ; but then she was so young !

Lady Sneer. And had, indeed, some good qualities.

Mrs. Can. So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars ?

Lady Sneer. No ; but everybody says that Mr. Surface ——

Sir Benj. Ay, there ; I told you Mr. Surface was the man.

Mrs. Can. No, no : indeed the assignation was with Charles.

Lady Sneer. With Charles ! You alarm me, Mrs. Candour !

Mrs. Can. Yes, yes ; he was the lover. Mr. Surface, to do him justice, was only the informer.

Sir Benj. Well, I'll not dispute with you, Mrs. Candour ; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not ——

Mrs. Can. Sir Peter's wound ! Oh, mercy ! I did n't hear a word of their fighting.

Lady Sneer. Nor I, a syllable.

Sir Benj. No ! what, no mention of the duel ?

Mrs. Can. Not a word.

Sir Benj. Oh, yes : they fought before they left the room.

Lady Sneer. Pray let us hear.

Mrs. Can. Ay, do oblige us with the duel.

Sir Benj. Sir, says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, *you are a most ungrateful fellow.*

Mrs. Can. Ay, to Charles ——

Sir Benj. No, no — to Mr. Surface — *a most ungrateful fellow ; and old as I am, sir, says he, I insist on immediate satisfaction.*

Mrs. Can. Ay, that must have been to Charles ;

for 't is very unlikely Mr. Surface should fight in his own house.

Sir Benj. Gad's life, ma'am, not at all — *giving me immediate satisfaction.* — On this, ma'am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water; then, madam, they began to fight with swords —

Enter CRABTREE.

Crab. With pistols, nephew — pistols! I have it from undoubted authority.

Mrs. Can. Oh, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true!

Crab. Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded —

Sir Benj. By a thrust in second quite through his left side —

Crab. By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

Mrs. Can. Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

Crab. Yes, madam; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

Mrs. Can. I told you who it was; I knew Charles was the person.

Sir Benj. My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

Crab. But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude —

Sir Benj. That I told you, you know —

Crab. Do, nephew, let me speak! — and insisted on immediate —

Sir Benj. Just as I said —

Crab. Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too! A pair of pistols lay on the bureau (for Mr. Surface, it seems, had come home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to see

the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton), so, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

Sir Benj. I heard nothing of this.

Crab. Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took effect, as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed; but, what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Shakespeare that stood over the fire-place, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

Sir Benj. My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I confess; but I believe mine is the true one, for all that.

Lady Sneer. [*Aside.*] I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information. [*Exit LADY SNEERWELL.*]

Sir Benj. Ah! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

Crab. Yes, yes, they certainly do say — but that's neither here nor there.

Mrs. Can. But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

Crab. Oh, they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny him.

Mrs. Can. I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

Crab. Yes, yes; and I saw one of the faculty enter just before me.

Sir Benj. Hey! who comes here?

Crab. Oh, this is he: the physician, depend on 't.

Mrs. Can. Oh, certainly! it must be the physician; and now we shall know.

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

Crab. Well, doctor, what hopes?

Mrs. Can. Ay, doctor, how 's your patient?

Sir Benj. Now, doctor, is n't it a wound with a small-sword?

Crab. A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!

Sir Oliv. Doctor! a wound with a small-sword! and a bullet in the thorax!—Oons! are you mad, good people?

Sir Benj. Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor?

Sir Oliv. Truly, I am to thank you for my degree, if I am.

Crab. Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident?

Sir Oliv. Not a word!

Crab. Not of his being dangerously wounded?

Sir Oliv. The devil he is!

Sir Benj. Run through the body——

Crab. Shot in the breast——

Sir Benj. By one Mr. Surface——

Crab. Ay, the younger.

Sir Oliv. Hey! what the plague! you seem to differ strangely in your accounts: however, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

Sir Benj. Oh, yes, we agree in that.

Crab. Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

Sir Oliv. Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation, he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was the matter.

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE.

Odds heart, Sir Peter! you are come in good time, I promise you; for we had just given you over!

Sir Benj. [*Aside to CRABTREE.*] Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

Sir Oliv. Why, man! what do you out of bed with a small-sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

Sir Peter. A small-sword and a bullet!

Sir Oliv. Ay; these gentlemen would have killed you without law or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

Sir Peter. Why, what is all this?

Sir Benj. We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.

Sir Peter. So, so; all over the town already! [*Aside.*

Crab. Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at your years.

Sir Peter. Sir, what business is that of yours?

Mrs. Can. Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied.

Sir Peter. Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.

Sir Benj. However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion.

Sir Peter. Sir, sir! I desire to be master in my own house.

Crab. 'Tis no uncommon case, that's one comfort.

Sir Peter. I insist on being left to myself: without ceremony,—I insist on your leaving my house directly!

Mrs. Can. Well, well, we are going; and depend on 't, we 'll make the best report of it we can. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter. Leave my house!

Crab. And tell how hardly you 've been treated.
[*Exit.*

Sir Peter. Leave my house!

Sir Benj. And how patiently you bear it. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter. Fiends! vipers! furies! Oh! that their own venom would choke them!

Sir Oliv. They are very provoking, indeed, Sir Peter.

Enter ROWLEY.

Row. I heard high words: what has ruffled you, sir?

Sir Peter. Pshaw! what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?

Row. Well, I 'm not inquisitive.

Sir Oliv. Well, Sir Peter, I have seen 'both my nephews in the manner we proposed.

Sir Peter. A precious couple they are!

Row. Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment was right, Sir Peter.

Sir Oliv. Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.

Row. Ay, as Sir Peter says, he is a man of sentiment.

Sir Oliv. And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

Row. It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

Sir Oliv. Oh, he 's a model for the young men of the age. — But how 's this, Sir Peter? you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise, as I expected.

Sir Peter. Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

Row. What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

Sir Peter. Pshaw! plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you!

Row. Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's so humble, that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with you.

Sir Peter. And does Sir Oliver know all this?

Sir Oliv. Every circumstance.

Sir Peter. What of the closet and the screen, hey?

Sir Oliv. Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story! ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter. 'T was very pleasant.

Sir Oliv. I never laughed more in my life, I assure you; ah! ah! ah!

Sir Peter. Oh, vastly diverting! ha! ha! ha!

Row. To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments! ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter. Yes, yes, his sentiments! ha! ha! ha! Hypocritical villain!

Sir Oliv. Ay, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the closet! ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter. Ha! ha! 't was devilish entertaining, to be sure!

Sir Oliv. Ha! ha! ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down! ha! ha!

Sir Peter. Yes, yes, my face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha! ha! Oh, I must never show my head again!

Sir Oliv. But come, come, it is n't fair to laugh at

you neither, my old friend ; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

Sir Peter. Oh, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account : it does not hurt me at all ! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation. Oh, yes, and then of a morning to read the paragraphs about Mr. S——, Lady T——, and Sir P——, will be so entertaining !

Row. Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools. But I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room ; I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

Sir Oliv. Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you ; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's, where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

Sir Peter. Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart ; though 't is a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

Row. We'll follow. [*Exit* SIR OLIVER SURFACE.]

Sir Peter. She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

Row. No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears.

Sir Peter. Certainly, a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little ?

Row. Oh, this is ungenerous in you !

Sir Peter. Well, I know not what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers evidently intended for Charles ?

Row. A mere forgery, Sir Peter ! laid in your

way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction of.

Sir Peter. I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has. Rowley, I'll go to her.

Row. Certainly.

Sir Peter. Though, when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

Row. Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

Sir Peter. I' faith, so I will! and, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

Row. Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion——

Sir Peter. Hold, Master Rowley! if you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment: I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House.*

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and LADY SNEERWELL.

Lady Sneer. Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of course no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me.

Jos. Surf. Can passion furnish a remedy?

Lady Sneer. No, nor cunning either. Oh, I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!

Jos. Surf. Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

Lady Sneer. Because the disappointment does n't reach your heart ; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

Jos. Surf. But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment ?

Lady Sneer. Are you not the cause of it ? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother, but you must endeavour to seduce his wife ? I hate such an avarice of crimes ; 't is an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

Jos. Surf. Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but I don't think we 're so totally defeated neither.

Lady Sneer. No !

Jos. Surf. You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us ?

Lady Sneer. I do believe so.

Jos. Surf. And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support ?

Lady Sneer. This, indeed, might have assisted.

Jos. Surf. Come, come ; it is not too late yet.—
[*Knocking at the door.*] But hark ! this is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver : retire to that room ; we 'll consult farther when he is gone.

Lady Sneer. Well, but if *he* should find you out, too ?

Jos. Surf. Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter

will hold his tongue for his own credit's sake — and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak side !

Lady Sneer. I have no diffidence of your abilities : only be constant to one roguery at a time.

Jos. Surf. I will, I will ! — [*Exit* LADY SNEERWELL.] So ! 't is confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events, my character is so much better than Charles's, that I certainly — hey ! — what — this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on 't that he should return to tease me just now ! I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here — and ——

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time ? You must not stay now, upon my word.

Sir Oliv. Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I 'll try what he 'll do for me.

Jos. Surf. Sir, 't is impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg —— come any other time, and I promise you you shall be assisted.

Sir Oliv. No : Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

Jos. Surf. Zounds, sir ! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

Sir Oliv. Nay, sir ——

Jos. Surf. Sir, I insist on 't ! — Here, William ! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment — this is such insolence.

[*Going to push him out.*]

Enter CHARLES SURFACE.

Chas. Surf. Heyday! what's the matter now? What the devil, have you got hold of my little broker here? Zounds, brother, don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow?

Jos. Surf. So! he has been with you too, has he?

Chas. Surf. To be sure, he has. Why, he's as honest a little —— But sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you?

Jos. Surf. Borrowing! no! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every ——

Chas. Surf. O Gad, that's true! Noll must n't find the little broker here, to be sure.

Jos. Surf. Yet Mr. Stanley insists ——

Chas. Surf. Stanley! why his name's Premium.

Jos. Surf. No, sir, Stanley.

Chas. Surf. No, no, Premium.

Jos. Surf. Well, no matter which —— but ——

Chas. Surf. Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 't is the same thing, as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A. B. at the coffee-house.

[*Knocking.*

Jos. Surf. 'Sdeath! here's Sir Oliver at the door. — Now I beg, Mr. Stanley ——

Chas. Surf. Ay, ay, and I beg Mr. Premium ——

Sir Oliv. Gentlemen ——

Jos. Surf. Sir, by Heaven you shall go!

Chas. Surf. Ay, out with him, certainly!

Sir. Oliv. This violence ——

Jos. Surf. Sir, 't is your own fault.

Chas. Surf. Out with him, to be sure.

[*Both forcing Sir Oliver out.*

Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE, MARIA, and ROWLEY.

Sir Peter. My old friend, Sir Oliver—hey! What in the name of wonder—here are dutiful nephews—assault their uncle at a first visit!

Lady Teaz. Indeed, Sir Oliver, 't was well we came in to rescue you.

Row. Truly it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was no protection to you.

Sir Oliv. Nor of Premium either: the necessities of the former could not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman; and with the other I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors, and being knocked down without being bid for.

Jos. Surf. Charles!

Chas. Surf. Joseph!

Jos. Surf. 'T is now complete!

Chas. Surf. Very.

Sir Oliv. Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too—look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him: judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of truth, charity, and gratitude!

Sir Peter. Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration, if I had not myself found him to be mean, treacherous, and hypocritical.

Lady Teaz. And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call *me* to his character.

Sir Peter. Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment that he is known to the world.

Chas. Surf. If they talk this way to Honesty, what will they say to me, by and by? [*Aside.*

[*SIR PETER, LADY TEAZLE, and MARIA retire.*

Sir Oliv. As for that prodigal, his brother there —

Chas. Surf. Ay, now comes my turn: the damned family pictures will ruin me! [*Aside.*

Jos. Surf. Sir Oliver — uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?

Chas. Surf. Now, if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little. [*Aside.*

Sir Oliv. I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely? [*To JOSEPH SURFACE.*

Jos. Surf. I trust I could.

Sir Oliv. [*To CHARLES SURFACE.*] Well, sir! — and you could justify yourself too, I suppose?

Chas. Surf. Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliv. What! Little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I suppose?

Chas. Surf. True, sir; but they were *family* secrets, and should not be mentioned again, you know.

Row. Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.

Sir Oliv. Odds heart, no more I can; nor with gravity either. — Sir Peter, do you know the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors; sold me judges and generals by the foot, and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china.

Chas. Surf. To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas, that's the truth on 't. My ancestors may rise in judgment against me, there's no denying it; but believe me sincere when I tell you — and upon my soul I would not say so if I was not — that if I do not appear mortified at

the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my liberal benefactor.

Sir Oliv. Charles, I believe you. Give me your hand again: the ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace.

Chas. Surf. Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.

Lady Teaz. [*Advancing.*] Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to. [*Pointing to MARIA.*

Sir Oliv. Oh, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right — that blush —

Sir Peter. Well, child, speak your sentiments!

Mar. Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy; for me, — whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign to one who has a better title.

Chas. Surf. How, Maria!

Sir Peter. Heyday! what's the mystery now? — While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he is likely to reform I'll warrant you won't have him!

Mar. His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

Chas. Surf. Lady Sneerwell!

Jos. Surf. Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed. [*Opens the door.*

Enter LADY SNEERWELL.

Sir Peter. So! another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room in the house, I suppose!

Lady Sneer. Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.

Chas. Surf. Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

Jos. Surf. I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

Sir Peter. And that person, I imagine, is Mr. Snake. — Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

Row. Walk in, Mr. Snake.

Enter SNAKE.

I thought his testimony might be wanted: however, it happens unluckily, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to support her.

Lady Sneer. A villain! Treacherous to me at last! Speak, fellow, have you, too, conspired against me?

Snake. I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons: you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

Sir Peter. Plot and counter-plot, egad! I wish your ladyship joy of your negotiation.

Lady Sneer. The torments of shame and disappointment on you all! [Going.]

Lady Teaz. Hold, Lady Sneerwell — before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken, in writing letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself; and let me also request you to make my respects to the scandalous college of which you are president, and

inform them that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they granted her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.

Lady Sneer. You, too, madam! — provoking — insolent! May your husband live these fifty years!

[*Exit.*

Sir Peter. Oons! what a fury!

Lady Teaz. A malicious creature, indeed!

Sir Peter. Hey! not for her last wish?

Lady Teaz. Oh, no!

Sir Oliv. Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

Jos. Surf. Sir, I am so confounded, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say: however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. For the man who attempts to —

[*Exit.*

Sir Peter. Moral to the last drop!

Sir Oliv. Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and Vinegar! — egad, you'll do very well together.

Row. I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present.

Snake. Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

Sir Peter. Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

Snake. But I must request of the company, that it shall never be known.

Sir Peter. Hey! — what the plague! — are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

Snake. Ah, sir, consider { I live by the badness of my character; I have nothing but my infamy to depend on! and, if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

Sir Oliv. Well, well—we'll not traduce you by saying anything in your praise, never fear.

[*Exit SNAKE.*]

Sir Peter. There's a precious rogue!

Lady Teaz. See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

Sir Oliv. Ay, ay, that's as it should be, and, egad, we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

Chas. Surf. Thank you, dear uncle.

Sir Peter. What, you rogue! don't you ask the girl's consent first?

Chas. Surf. Oh, I have done that a long time—a minute ago—and she has looked yes.

Mar. For shame, Charles!—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word——

Sir Oliv. Well, then, the fewer the better; may your love for each other never know abatement.

Sir Peter. And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do!

Chas. Surf. Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me; and I suspect that I owe you much.

Sir Oliv. You do, indeed, Charles.

Row. If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt; but deserve to be happy and you overpay me.

Sir Peter. Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

Chas. Surf. Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that I take to be a proof that

I intend to set about it. But here shall be my monitor
— my gentle guide. — Ah ! can I leave the virtuous
path those eyes illumine ?

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst waive thy beauty's sway,
Thou still must rule, because I will obey :
An humble fugitive from Folly view,
No sanctuary near but Love and you : [*To the audience.*]

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,
For even Scandal dies, if you approve.

EPILOGUE.

BY MR. COLMAN.

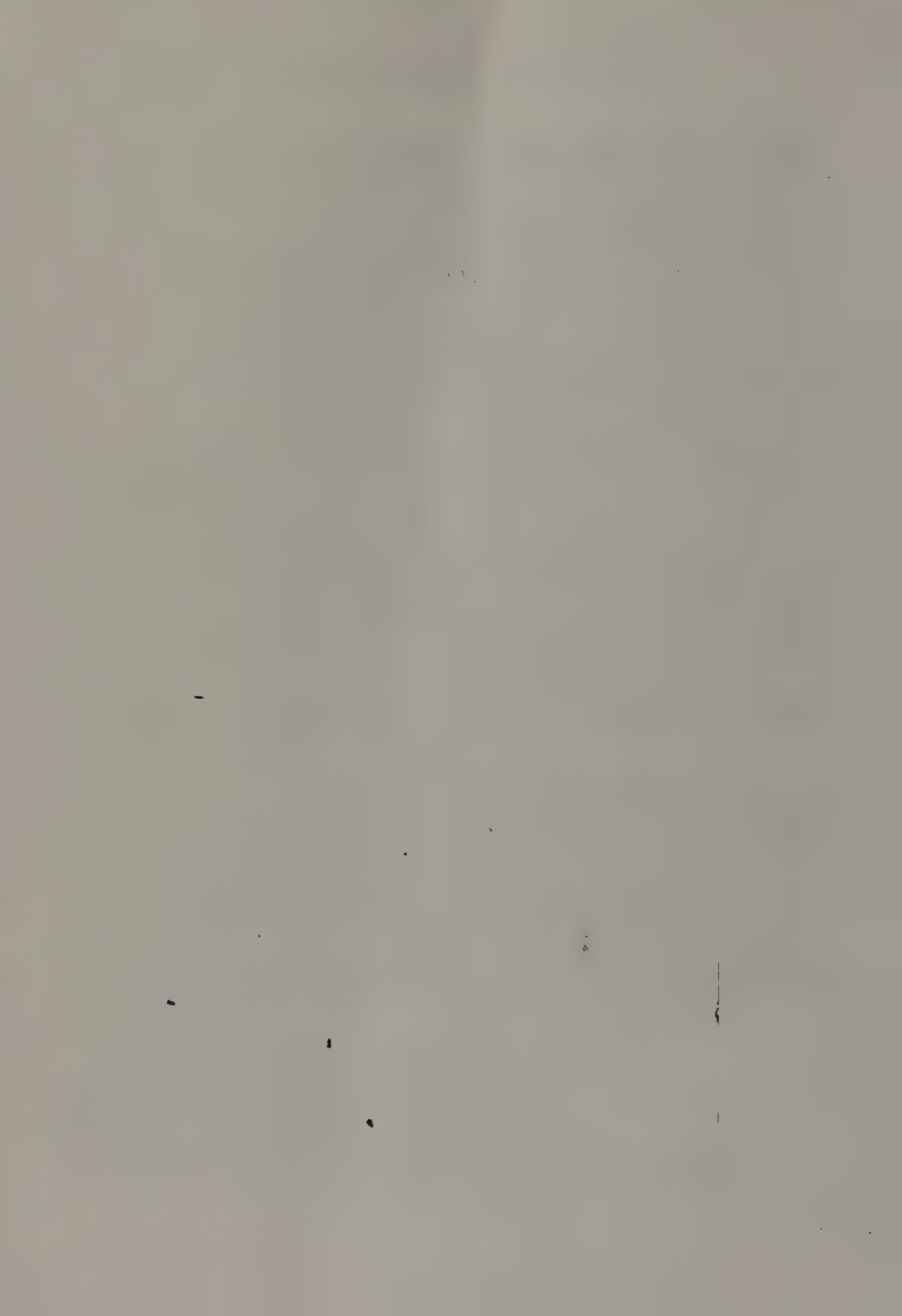
SPOKEN BY LADY TEAZLE.

I, WHO was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade-wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock — my spouse !
So wills our virtuous bard — the motley Bayes
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays !
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives ;
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her —
London will prove the very source of honour,
Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax, to brace the nerves :
Such is my case ; and yet I must deplore
That the gay dream of dissipation 's o'er.
And say, ye fair ! was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me untimely blasted in her bloom,
Like me condemn'd to such a dismal doom ?
Save money — when I just knew how to waste it !
Leave London — just as I began to taste it !
Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
The melancholy ticking of a clock ;
In a lone rustic hall forever pounded ;
With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded ?

With humble curate can I now retire,
(While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire,)
And at backgammon mortify my soul,
That pants for loo, or flutters at a vole?
Seven's the main! Dear sound that must expire,
Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire;
The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
Farewell the plumèd head, the cushion'd tête,
That takes the cushion from its proper seat!
That spirit-stirring drum! — card drums I mean,
Spadille — odd trick — pam — basto — king and
queen!

And you, ye knockers, that, with brazen throat,
The welcome visitors' approach denote;
Farewell all quality of high renown,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious town!
Farewell! your revels I partake no more,
And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er!
All this I told our bard; he smiled, and said 't was
clear,

I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
And in these solemn periods stalk'd away: —
“ Bless'd were the fair like you; her faults who stopp'd
And closed her follies when the curtain dropp'd!
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage.”



NOTES.

THE RIVALS

PREFACE.

"FADED ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted."

This passage was quoted by Burgoyne, in the preface of the 'Heiress.' The same thought is to be found also in the 'Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,' where Dr. Holmes said, "I never wrote a line of verse that seemed to me comparatively good, but it appeared old at once, and often as if it had been borrowed." A little earlier in the same chapter, the Autocrat had declared the law which governs in such cases: "When a person of fair character for literary honesty uses an image such as another has employed before him, the presumption is that he has struck upon it independently, or unconsciously recalled it, supposing it his own."

"It is not without pleasure that I catch at an opportunity of justifying myself from the charge of intending any national reflection in the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger."

In his 'Retrospections of the Stage,' John Bernard, who was present at the unfortunate first performance of the 'Rivals,' has declared that the audience was indifferent to Sir Lucius, as acted by Lee. When the play was revised, Clinch took the part. Why any one should object to Sir Lucius, it is now difficult to discover. Sir Lucius is one of the best of stage-Irishmen, and he is emphatically an Irish gentleman.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

"*Thomas.* — But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath?"

It is not easy now to understand fully the extraordinary brilliancy of Bath after Beau Nash had organized society there. The manners and customs of Bath, as they were a very few years before the date of the '*Rivals*,' may be seen in Anstey's '*New Bath Guide*,' first published in 1766; and Anstey's lively verses prove that the town offered unusual advantages to the social satirist and the comic dramatist. In '*Humphrey Clinker*,' Smollett has left us an elaborate description of the place and the people to be met there. Foote's comedy, the '*Maid of Bath*,' was a dramatic setting of the romantic story of Miss Linley, Sheridan's wife. The best account of Bath at this time is to be found in a French book, A. Barbeau's '*Une Ville d'Eaux Anglaise*' (Paris: Picard, 1904).

SCENE II.

"*Lydia.* — And could not you get the '*Reward of Constancy*'?"

Miss Lydia Languish seems to have had a catholic taste in fiction. Most of the books she sought were novelties: the '*Mistakes of the Heart*' and the '*Tears of Sensibility*' were translations from the French, published in 1773. The '*Delicate Distress*' and the '*Gordian Knot*' had been published together in four volumes in the same year. The '*Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*' (*i.e.* *Lady Vane*) were included in Smollett's '*Peregrine Pickle*,' published first in 1751; '*Humphrey Clinker*' did not appear till 1771. The '*Sentimental Journey*' had been originally published in 1768, in two volumes.

"*Lydia.* — Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books."

Miss Languish was evidently fond of Smollett. After '*Peregrine Pickle*,' with its '*Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*,' and after '*Humphrey Clinker*,' comes '*Roderick Random*,' published in

1748. The 'Innocent Adultery' was the second title of Southerne's tragedy, the 'Fatal Marriage,' revived as 'Isabella; or, the Fatal Marriage,' for Mrs. Siddons, after Sheridan became the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. A century ago English plays were read as French plays are still. Henry Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' had first appeared in 1771. Mrs. Chapone's 'Letters on the Improvement of the Mind,' addressed to her niece, had been published in 1773 in two volumes; and Lord Chesterfield's 'Letters,' written in 1768, had not been given to the world until 1774. From notes found by Moore, we know that Sheridan had begun to draft a criticism of Lord Chesterfield's precepts just before he sat down resolutely to the writing of this play.

"*Mrs. Mal.* — 'Tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion."

With a readiness recalling Sheridan's own promptness in repartee, George Canning quoted this assertion of Mrs. Malaprop's, in a speech delivered in the House of Commons in 1825.

"*Sir Anthony.* — Well, I must leave you."

The traditional business of Sir Anthony's departure requires him to bow and gain the door, and then to return to say the next clause as though it had just occurred to him. This leave-taking, protracted by Mrs. Malaprop's elaborate courtesies, is repeated two or three times before Sir Anthony finally takes himself off.

"*Lucy.* — And a black padusoy."

Paduasoy was a particular kind of silk stuff, deriving its name from the Italian town Padua, and the French word *soie*, silk.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

"*Fag.* — I beg pardon, sir — I beg pardon — but, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever

I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge indorsements as well as the bill."

This use of mercantile technicalities was not uncommon with Sheridan ; and Fag's idioms may be compared with Sir Peter Teazle's declaration ('School for Scandal,' Act II., Scene II.) that he "would have law merchant," for those who report what they hear, so that, "in all cases of slander currency, whenever the draw of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the indorsers."

"Enter *Faulkland*."

Faulkland is the name of two prominent characters, a father and a son, in the 'Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph,' the novel written by Mrs. Frances Sheridan ; but neither of them in any way resembles this Faulkland of her son's.

"*Acres*. — My hair has been in training some time."

Here Acres removes his cap, and shows his side-curls in papers. After his next speech, he turns his back to the audience to show his back-hair elaborately dressed.

"*Acres*. — Damns have had their day."

In his 'History of the English Stage' (v. 461), the Rev. Mr. Geneste quotes an epigram of Sir John Harrington's, quite pertinent here : —

"In elder times, an ancient custom was
To swear, in weighty matters, by the mass ;
But when the mass went down, as old men note,
They sware, then, by the cross of this same groat ;
And when the cross was likewise held in scorn,
Then by their faith the common oath was sworn ;
Last having sworn away all faith and troth,
Only God damn them is their common oath.
Thus custom kept decorum by gradation,
That losing mass, cross, faith, they find damnation."

"*Sir Anthony*. — What 's that to you, sir ?"

The alleged likeness of Sir Anthony to Smollett's Matthew Bramble is very slight indeed. Sheridan's treatment of Sir Anthony in this scene and in the contrasting scene in the next act is exquisite comedy. In these two scenes is to be found the finest writing in the play. The present scene may be compared with one somewhat similar between Mrs. Linnet and Miss Linnet in the first act of Foote's 'Maid of Bath.'

"*Sir Anthony*. — Like the bull in Cox's Museum."

Cox's Museum was a popular and fashionable exhibition of natural and mechanical curiosities. There are many allusions to it in contemporary literature. In 'Evelina,' for instance, published in 1778, three years after the 'Rivals' was written, Miss Burney takes her heroine to Cox's Museum and describes some of the many marvels it must have contained.

SCENE II.

"*Fag*. — We will — we will. [*Exeunt severally.*]"

The traditional business here is for Fag to parody the exit of Sir Lucius just before, calling Lucy, kissing her, saying, "I'll quiet your conscience," and then making his exit, humming the tune he has just caught from Sir Lucius.

ACT III.

SCENE III.

"*Mrs. Mal.* — Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree. — I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow; I believe I have it in my pocket."

As Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. John Drew used first to take from her pocket the letter of Sir Lucius and then discovering her mistake to produce with much difficulty and in great confusion the letter which Capt. Absolute recognizes at once. (See 'The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson,' pp. 400-401.)

"*Lydia*. — O heavens! Beverley!"

Lydia Languish has been called a second edition of Colman's Polly Honeycombe; but the charge has only the slightest foundation. It would have been more difficult to evolve Lydia from Polly than to have made her out of nothing. If a prototype must be found for Lydia, it had better be sought in the Niece in Steele's 'Tender Husband.' In Steele's play, the relations of the Aunt and the Niece are not unlike those of Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia; and we are told that the Niece "has spent all her solitude in reading romances, her head is full of shepherds, knights, flowery meads, groves, and streams (Act I., Scene I.). And she anticipates Lydia in thinking that "it looks so ordinary, to go out at a door to be married. Indeed I ought to be taken out of a window, and run away with" (Act IV., Scene I.). It may be noted, also, that the lover of Steele's airy heroine visits her in disguise and makes love to her before the face of the Aunt.

SCENE IV.

"*Acres* [*practising a dancing step*]. — These outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillons are quite beyond me. I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure. Mine are true-born English legs. They don't understand their curst French lingo."

In his 'History of the English Stage,' Geneste recalls a parallel passage in the 'Wasps' of Aristophanes, where the old man, on being desired to put on a pair of Lacedemonian boots, endeavours to excuse himself by saying that one of his toes is a sworn enemy to the Lacedemonians.

"*Acres*. — That's too civil by half."

In the writing of the challenge most actors of Acres indulge in "gags" beyond the bounds of all decency, and until comedy sinks into clowning. Mr. Joseph Jefferson refuses to make the judicious grieve by saying, "to prevent the confusion that might arise from our both *undressing* the same lady," and other vulgarities of that sort, retaining, however, the subtler jest

of Acres's pause and hesitation when he comes to the word "company," of his significant whisper in the ear of Sir Lucius, and of Sir Lucius's prompt solution of the orthographical problem, — "With a *c*, of course!"

ACT IV.

SCENE II.

"*Mrs. Malaprop.* — Comparisons don't become a young woman."

Here Mrs. Malaprop comes very near to Dogberry's "comparisons are odorous" ('Much Ado About Nothing,' Act III., Scene V.). Perhaps the earliest use of the phrase is in 'The Posies of George Cascoigne' (1575), where we find, "Since all comparisons are odious."

ACT V.

SCENE I.

"*Faulkland.* — Julia, I have proved you to the quick!"

Moore considers that this scene was suggested by Prior's ballad of the 'Nut-brown Maid,' and so indeed it may have been, although Prior's situation is very different from Sheridan's. In the 'Nut-brown Maid,' the high-born lover conceals his rank, approaches his mistress in various disguises, and at last tests her love by a tale of murder, like Faulkland's. She stands the test like Julia. Then the lover confesses the trick and reveals his rank, whereat the maid is joyful. The point of Sheridan's more dramatic situation is in the recoil of Faulkland's distrustful ingenuity on his own head, and the rejection of his suit by Julia, so soon as he declares his fraud.

"*Lydia.* — How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue."

In his notes to his own translation of Horace, Sir Theodore Martin drew attention to the likeness of this speech of Lydia's

to the lines in the Tenth Ode of the Third Book, in which Horace adjures a certain Lycè to take pity on him.

"You would pity, sweet Lycè, the poor soul that shivers
Out here at your door in the merciless blast.

"Only hark how the doorway goes straining and creaking,
And the piercing wind pipes through the trees that surround
The court of your villa, while black frost is streaking.
With ice the crisp snow that lies thick on the ground!

* * * * *

"Yet be not as cruel — forgive my upbraiding —
As snakes, nor as hard as the toughest of oak;
Think, to stand out here, drenched to the skin, serenading
All night may in time prove too much of a joke."

SCENE II.

"*Absolute.* — Really, sir, you have the advantage of me."

Captain Absolute is the son of a long line of light and lively heroes of comedy, and the father of a line almost as long. Foremost among his ancestors is the inventive protagonist of Foote's 'Liar,' and foremost among his progeny is the even more slippery young man in Boucicault's 'London Assurance,' who ventures to deny his father in much the same fashion as Captain Absolute.

SCENE III.

"*Acres.* — By my valour!"

By a hundred devious ways, Bob Acres traces his descent from that other humorous coward, Sir Andrew Aguecheek; and the duels into which both gentlemen enter valiantly are not without a certain highly comic resemblance.

"*Sir Lucius.* — I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey."

This reference is, of course, to the Abbey church, at Bath, in which Sarah Fielding, the sister of the novelist, is buried.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

"*Lady Sneer.*—The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?"

In the original draft of this scene, now in the possession of the Sheridans of Frampton Court, Dorchester, the person with whom Lady Sneerwell is conversing is a Miss Verjuice, and it is only later in the scene, after the entrance of Joseph Surface, that we find a reference to "Snake, the Scribbler." In revising the scene, Sheridan found that one character might suffice for the minor dirty work of the plot; and to this character he gave the dialogue of Miss Verjuice and the name of Snake. The name Sneerwell is to be found in Fielding's 'Pasquin.'

"*Servant.*—Mr. Surface."

In 'A Journey to Bath,' an unacted comedy by Mrs. Frances Sheridan, three acts of which are preserved in the British Museum (MS. 25, 975), there is a Mrs. Surface, "one who keeps a lodging-house at Bath." She is no relation to either of the Surfaces in the 'School for Scandal'; yet it may be worth noting that she is a scandal-monger who hates scandal. See Mr. W. Fraser Rae's edition of 'Sheridan's Plays as he wrote them' (London: Nutt, 1902). 'A Journey to Bath' is also included.

SCENE II.

"*Rowley.*—Oh, Sir Peter, your servant!"

Rowley is one of the many faithful stewards, frequent in comedy. Perhaps the first of them was Trusty in Steele's 'Funeral.'

ACT II.

SCENE I.

"*Sir Peter.* — And three powdered footmen before your chair."

In 1777, when Sheridan wrote, only people of the highest position and fashion made their footmen powder their hair; so Sir Peter is here reproaching Lady Teazle with her exalted ambitions.

"*Sir Peter.* — You were content to ride double, behind the butler on a docked coach-horse."

Professor Ward, in his 'History of English Dramatic Literature,' draws attention to a parallel passage in Fletcher's 'Noble Gentleman' (Act II., Scene I.), in which Marine threatens to take his fashionable wife home again: —

"Make you ready straight,
And in that gown which you first came to town in,
Your safe-cloak, and your hood suitable,
Thus on a double gelding shall you amble,
And my man Jaques shall be set before you."

"*Sir Peter.* — Ay — there again — taste ! Zounds ! madam, you had no taste when you married me !"

It seems as though John G. Saxe may have remembered this speech of Sir Peter's when he wrote his epigram, 'Too Candid by half': —

"As Tom and his wife were discoursing one day
Of their several faults, in a bantering way,
Said she: 'Though my *wit* you disparage,
I'm sure, my dear husband, our friends will attest
This much, at the least, that my *judgment* is best.'
Quoth Tom: 'So they said at our marriage!'"

SCENE II.

" *Sir Benjamin Backbite* : —

" Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies ;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies :
To give them this title I 'm sure can't be wrong,
Their legs are so slim and their tails are so long."

The reading of this epigram by Sir Benjamin Backbite is perhaps another of Sheridan's reminiscences of Molière; at least there is a situation not unlike it in the '*Précieuses Ridicules*,' in the '*Femmes Savantes*,' and in the '*Misanthrope*.' In the final quarter of the eighteenth century, there arose a species of dandy called the macaroni, much as in the final quarter of the nineteenth century there arose a variety called the dude.

" The Italians are extremely fond of a dish they call macaroni, composed of a kind of paste; and, as they consider this the *summum bonum* of all good eating, so they figuratively call everything they think elegant and uncommon *macaroni*. Our young travellers, who generally catch the follies of the countries they visit, judged that the title of *macaroni* was applicable to a *clever fellow*; and, accordingly, to distinguish themselves as such, they instituted a club under this denomination, the members of which were supposed to be the standards of *taste*. They make a most ridiculous figure, with hats of an inch in the brim, that do not cover, but lie upon, the head; with about two pounds of fictitious hair, formed into what is called a *club*, hanging down their shoulders, as white as a baker's sack" ('*Pocket-book*,' 1773, quoted in Mr. T. L. O. Davies's '*Supplementary Glossary*'). The name of the macaroni is also preserved in the first stanza of our '*Yankee Doodle*,' which is almost contemporaneous with Sheridan's play.

" *Sir Peter*. — A character dead at every word, I suppose."

Moore noted the resemblance of this aside to Pope's line, in the '*Rape of the Lock*': —

" At every word, a reputation dies."

This scandal scene of Sheridan's had predecessors in the comedies of Congreve and of Wycherley, not to go back as far as the 'Misanthrope' of Molière. Hard and cruel as Sheridan's scene now seems to us, it is gentle indeed when contrasted with the cudgel-play of Congreve and Wycherley. It is possible that Sheridan owed some of his comparative suavity to the example of Addison, who contributed to No. 17 of the *Spectator*, a 'Fine Lady's Journal,' in which there is a passage of tittle-tattle more like Sheridan than Wycherley or Congreve.

"*Sir Peter*. — Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too."

Geneste, in his 'History of the English Stage,' draws attention to a parallel passage in the 'Trinummus' of Plautus, and suggests that it would furnish a very pat motto for this play: —

"Quod si exquiratur usque ab stirpe auctoritas,
Unde quicquid auditum dicant, nisi id appareat.
Famigeratori res sit cum damno et malo:
Hoc ita si fiat, publico fiat bono.
Pauci sint faxim, qui sciant quod nesciunt;
Occlusioremque habeant stultiloquentiam."

ACT III.

SCENE I.

"*Sir Peter*. — But, Moses! would not you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill?"

In 1777 a committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the laws concerning usury and annuities; and on its report in May, the month in which this play was first acted, a bill was brought in and passed, providing that all contracts with minors for annuities shall be void, and that those procuring them and solicitors charging more than ten shillings *per cent* shall be subject to fine or imprisonment.

"*Sir Peter*. — No, never!"

The traditional business of the scene is for Sir Peter and Lady Teazle here to take each other by the hand and to repeat, in unison, "Never! never! never!"

SCENE II.

"*Trip*. — And find our own bags and bouquets."

In the original draft of the several scenes which Sheridan finally combined into the 'School for Scandal,' this phrase, 'bags and bouquets,' was said to Sir Peter as he was complaining of Lady Teazle's extravagances. This utilization at last of a phrase at first rejected elsewhere is highly characteristic of Sheridan.

"*Trip*. — Or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet."

Sheridan has been accused, justly enough, of making his servants talk as their masters; but this is an old failing of writers of comedy, although few of them would have risked this accurate use of the legal phraseology which Sheridan at all times affected. But there is in Ben Jonson's 'Every Man in his Humour' (Act III., Scene II.) a speech of Knowell's servant, Brainworm, in which we find the very same technical term as we have in the text: "This smoky varnish being washed off, and three or four patches removed, I appear your worship's [servant] in reversion, after the decease of your good father, Brainworm." Sheridan's Trip and Fag recall the amusing personages of 'High Life below Stairs,' suggested by a paper of Steele's, 'On Servants,' in the *Spectator*, No. 88.

SCENE III.

"*Sir Harry Bumper* — Sings."

It has been asserted (in *Notes and Queries*, 5th S., ii., 245, and elsewhere) that Sheridan derived this song from a ballad in Suckling's play, the 'Goblins'; but a careful comparison of the two songs shows that there is really no foundation for the

charge. The music to Sheridan's song was composed by his father-in-law, Thomas Linley, who had been his partner in the 'Duenna.'

"*Moses.* — Oh, pray, sir, consider! Mr. Premium's a gentleman."

In Foote's 'Minor,' there is a spendthrift son, whose father visits him in disguise to test him; and in Foote's 'Arthur,' a father returns in disguise, and, to his great delight, hears his son disclose the most admirable sentiments; but there is no real likeness between either of Foote's scenes and this of Sheridan's, the real original of which is perhaps to be found in his mother's 'Sidney Biddulph,' in which an East Indian uncle returns to test a nephew and a niece. Yet there is possibly a slight resemblance between "little Premium the broker," and "little Transfer, the broker," in the "Minor."

"*Moses.* — Oh, yes; I 'll swear to 't!"

An erring tradition authorizes Moses to interpolate freely and frequently throughout the rest of the scene a more or less meaningless "I 'll take my oath of that." As the part of Moses is generally taken by the low comedian who also appears as Tony Lumpkin, this gag may be a reminiscence of the comic scene in 'She Stoops to Conquer,' in which Tony offers to swear to his mother's assertion that Miss Hardcastle's jewels have been stolen.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

"*Charles.* — But come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer."

The absurdity of an auction with only one bidder has been commented upon often, but surely Sheridan never intended the auction to be taken seriously. The pretence of an auction is surely a freak of Charles's humour and high spirits.

Charles. — Well, here 's my great uncle, Sir Richard Raveline."

The 'School for Scandal' was one of the plays performed by the English actors on their famous visit to Paris in 1827, — a visit which revealed the might and range of the English drama to the French and thereby served to make possible the Romanticist revolt of 1830. Victor Hugo was an assiduous follower of the English performances; and it may be that this scene of the 'School for Scandal' suggested to him the scene with the portraits in 'Hernani.'

SCENE II.

Charles. — Be just before you 're generous."

In a note to an anonymous pamphlet biographical sketch of Sheridan, published in 1799, there is quoted a remark of a lady which is not without point and pertinency: "Mr. Sheridan is a fool if he pays a bill (of which, by the by, he is not accused) of one of the tradesmen who received his comedy with such thunders of applause. He ought to tell them in the words of Charles, that he could never make Justice keep pace with Generosity, and they could have no right to complain."

SCENE III.

Joseph. — Stay, stay; draw that screen before the windows!"

It has been often objected that the hiding of Lady Teazle behind the screen put her in full view of the opposite neighbour, the maiden lady of so curious a temper; but it must be remembered that it is Joseph who makes this remark and has the screen set, and it is Lady Teazle who unwittingly rushes to hide behind it.

Joseph. — Ah, my dear madam, there is the great mistake. 'Tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you."

The late Abraham Hayward, in his 'Selected Essays' (i. 400), calls this "the recast of a fine reflection in 'Zadig,'" and quotes,

in a foot-note, Voltaire's words: "Astarté est femme, elle laisse parler ses regards avec d'autant plus d'imprudence qu'elle ne se croit pas encore coupable. Malheureusement rassurée sur son innocence, elle néglige les dehors nécessaires. Je tremblerai pour elle tant qu'elle n'aura rien à se reprocher."

"Charles Surface throws down the screen."

Boaden, the biographer of Kemble, has the hyper-ingenuity to discover in the fall of the rug in Molly Seagrim's bedroom, disclosing the philosopher Square, in 'Tom Jones,' the first germ of the fall of the screen in the 'School for Scandal.'

"*Sir Peter.* — Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!"

Nowadays most Sir Peters take this situation to heart as though the 'School for Scandal' were a tragedy, but the play is a comedy, and this scene is, and is meant to be, comic, and not tragic, or even purely pathetic. It is the vanity rather than the honour of Sir Peter in which he feels the wound. If he is as deeply moved as Othello, the following speech of Charles is unspeakably heartless and brutal; — and so, indeed, it is, as it is delivered by most comedians.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

"*Sir Oliver.* — What! has he never transmitted to you bullion — rupees — pagodas?"

The rupee and the pagoda were coins current in Hindustan. The rupee is of silver and is equivalent to about two shillings sterling. The pagoda was either gold or silver, and its value varied from eight to nine shillings sterling. The avadavats mentioned in an earlier speech are birds of brilliant plumage.

SCENE II.

"*Sir Benjamin.* — By a thrust in segoon quite through his left side."

"Segoon" is a corruption of *segunde*, the Spanish form of the French fencing term *seconde*. Mr. Walter Herries Pollock kindly gave me this information, sought elsewhere in vain. A thrust in segoon, he writes, is "a thrust delivered low, under the adversary's blade, with the hand in the tierce position, that is, with the knuckles upwards, and the wrist turned downwards. The parry is now more frequently used than is the thrust of *seconde*, and is especially valuable in disarming; but the thrust is very useful in certain cases, and particularly for one form of the *coup d'arret*. A lunge in *seconde* which goes through the lung is nowadays an odd thing to hear of; but such a result might come from the blade of the man using the thrust in *seconde* being thrown upwards by a slip on the adversary's blade, arm, or shirt."

"Crabtree. — From Salthill, where he had been to see the Montem."

The Montem was a triennial ceremony of the boys at Eton, abolished only in 1847. It consisted of a procession to a mound (*ad montem*) near the Bath Road, where they exacted money from those present and from all passers-by. The sum collected, sometimes nearly £1000, went to the captain or senior scholar, and served to pay his expenses at the university. There is an interesting account of the Montem in 'Coningsby.'

"Crabtree. — Who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire."

Tradition formerly authorized Mrs. Candour to interpolate here a query as to whether the postage had been paid or not; but this seems to be carrying the joke a little too far.

SCENE III.

"Snake. — Ah, sir, consider I live by the badness of my character."

In the first draft of the play this speech of Snake's was in one of the earliest scenes. The anonymous writer of a pamphlet,

'Letter to Thomas Moore, Esq., on the subject of Sheridan's "School for Scandal"' (Bath, 1826), declares that "this is but boyish composition, and quite too broad even for farce. It might have been said to Snake by another, but is out of even stage-nature or stage-necessity, as coming from himself" (p. 16).

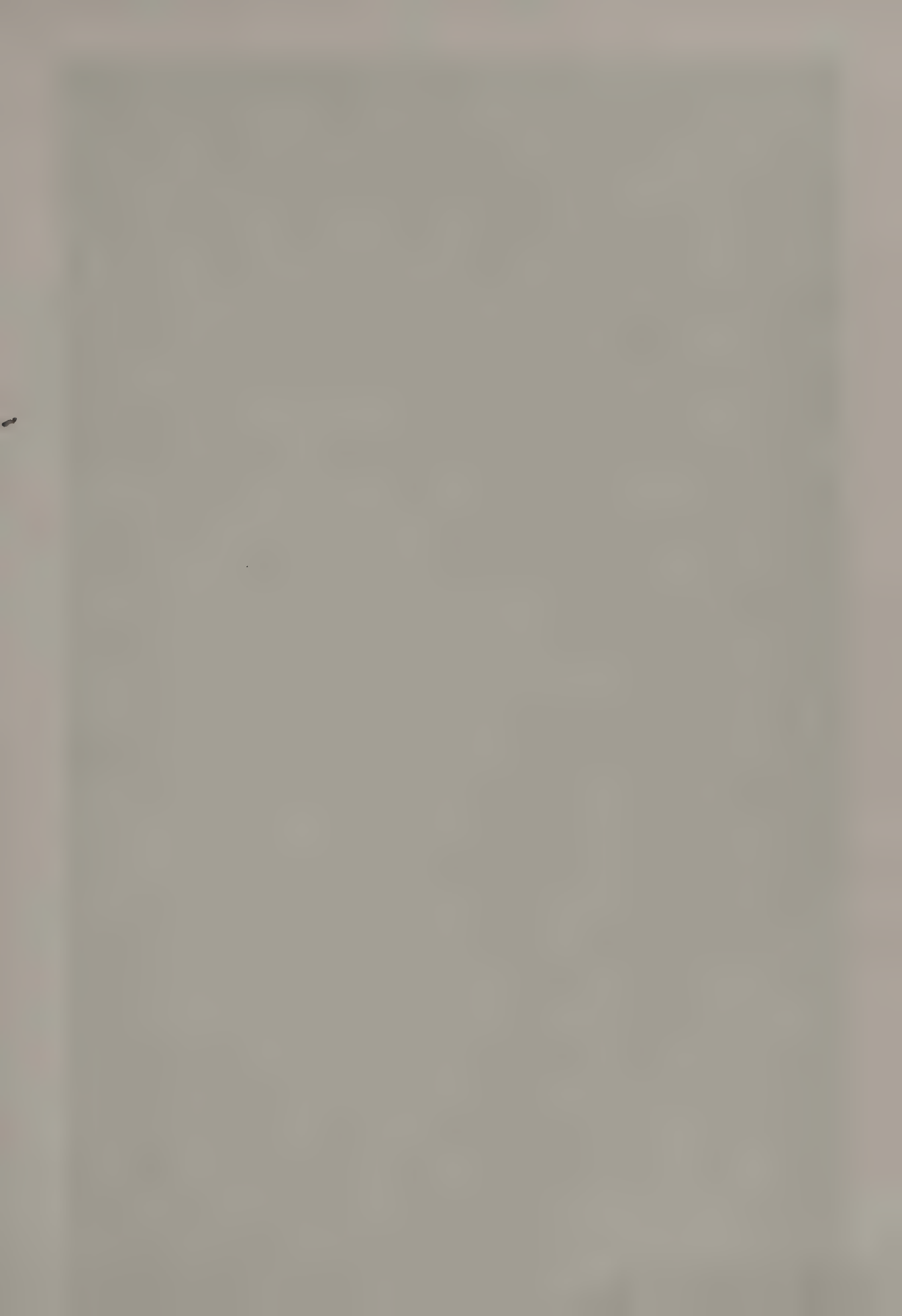
EPILOGUE.

"So wills our virtuous bard the motley Bayes."

Bayes was the hero of the Duke of Buckingham's 'Rehearsal,' and was a caricature of John Dryden. At the time this epilogue was written the 'Rehearsal' had not yet been driven from the stage by the 'Critic.'

"Spadille — odd trick — pam — basto — king and queen."

In the game of ombre, at its height when Pope wrote the 'Rape of the Lock,' and still surviving when Colman wrote this epilogue, "Spadille" was the ace of spades, "pam" was the knave of clubs, and "basto" was the ace of clubs.



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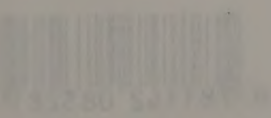
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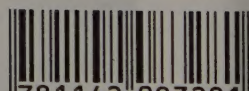
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